

# St. Louis Literary Calendar



## Events in September

All events are free unless otherwise indicated. Book events are followed by signings. All phone numbers take 314 prefix unless indicated.

### Thursday, September 1

Readings @ The Schlafly Tap Room presents **Geraldine Kim** and **Stephanie Schlaifer** reading from their work, Schlafly Tap Room, 2100 Locust, 8pm, 221-8671.

### Thursday, September 8

**Michael V. Roberts** discusses his book *Action Has No Season: Strategies and Secrets to Gaining Wealth and Authority*, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 7pm, 994-3300.

### Saturday, September 10

**Mystery Lovers' Book Club** meets to discuss *Death of a Traveling Man*, SLPL Carondelet Branch, 6800 Michigan, 10am, 752-9224.

### Sunday, September 11

**Michael Kahn** discusses his latest suspense novel, *The Mourning Sexton*, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 2pm, 862-6280.

### Tuesday, September 13

**LBB** and **First Civilizations** present **Cornel West** discussing *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*, Harris-Stowe State College Main Auditorium, 3026 Laclede, 7pm, 367-6731.

**St. Louis Writers Guild** hosts Open Mic Night, Kaldi's Coffeehouse, 120 S. Kirkwood, 7pm, 821-3823.

### Wednesday, September 14

**David Horowitz**, author of *Left Illusions: An Intellectual Odyssey*, speaks on the topic "Academic Freedom and the War on Terror" as part of the Fall 2005 **WU Assembly Series**, Graham Chapel, 11am, 935-5297.

**Boone's Bookies** discuss *Snow Falling on Cedars*, SLCL Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson, 2pm & 7pm, 636-227-9630.

**Sisters in Crime** presents **Officer Neal Kohrs** speaking on "The Investigator's Role in Police Work," SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 6:45pm, 636-938-7163.

SLCL presents **Steven Watts** speaking about his book *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 7pm, 994-3300.

### Friday, September 16

**Harry Mark Petrakis** reads from his works on the UMSL campus, Millenium Student Center, Century Room C, 7pm, 516-6495.

### Sunday, September 18

**St. Louis Poetry Center's Public Poetry Workshop** features **David Clewell** critiquing poems pre-submitted by September 12, University City Library, 6701 Delmar, 1:30pm, 770-9130.

**Philippa Gregory** discusses her book *The Virgin's Lover*, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 2pm, 862-6280.

### Monday, September 19

**Kathleen Dalton** discusses her book *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*, Missouri History Museum, Forest Park, 7pm, 361-9265.

**River Styx** presents **Ruth Ellen Kocher** and **Greg Pape**, Duff's Restaurant, 392 N. Euclid, 7:30pm, \$5/\$4, 533-4541.

### Tuesday, September 20

**Donna Biffar** reads her poetry, 209 Clark Hall, UMSL, 11am, 516-6845.

**Greg Pape** reads his poetry, 311 Clark Hall, UMSL, 11am, 516-6845.

**Cliff Cave Book Discussion Group** meets to discuss *A Changed Man*, SLCL Cliff Cave Branch, 5430 Telegraph, 2pm, 487-6003.

**Kingshighway Library Book Discussion Group** discusses *Middlesex* by **Jeffrey Eugenides**, 2260 S. Vandeventer, 6:45pm, 771-5450.

### Wednesday, September 21

**WU Assembly Series** presents "Crime Can Pay: A Conversation with **Lorenzo Carcaterra**," screenwriter and novelist, Graham Chapel, 11am, 935-5297.

**Women in the Arts** presents **Ruth Ellen Kocher** reading from her poems, Gallery 210, Telecommunity Center, UMSL, 3pm, 516-7776.

**Florissant Valley Book Discussion Club** meets, SLCL Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant, 7:30pm, 921-7200.

### Thursday, September 22

**Susan Shipman Cryer** performs "All-American Poetry," Missouri History Museum, Forest Park, 10:30am, 454-3150.

### Friday, September 23

**Mary Engelbreit** discusses her new book *Mary Engelbreit's Mother Goose*, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 7pm, 994-3300.

### Saturday, September 24

**Midwest Mysteryfest** mystery writers' conference, St. Charles Community College Student Center, 4601 Mid Rivers Mall, 8am. For reservations, call 636-938-7163.

**Brad Cohen** discusses his book *Front of the Class: How Tourette Syndrome Made Me the Teacher I Never Had*, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 2pm, 862-6280.

## Continued...

**Sunday, September 25**

Ron Powers discusses his book *Mark Twain: A Life*, Missouri History Museum, Forest Park, 2pm, 454-3150.

**Monday, September 26**

Nan Sweet reads from *Mix of Securities* and Martha Ficklen from *The Palm Leaf Fan*, Duff's Restaurant, 392 N. Euclid, 7:30pm, 647-1925.

**Tuesday, September 27**

St. Louis Gateway Storytellers swap stories at the Salad Bowl Cafeteria, 3949 Lindell, 6pm, \$5, 636-443-2062.

**Wednesday, September 28**

WU Assembly Series features Jon Butler, author of *Religion in American Life*, lecturing on "The Miracle of Religion in Modern American History," WU Graham Chapel, 11am, 935-5297.

**Friday, September 30**

Authors Arielle Eckstut and David Sterry discuss their book *Putting Your Passion into Print*, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 3pm, 994-3300.

### Notices

St. Louis Writers Guild hosts a 5+5

Critique Workshop and general business meeting on Saturday, September 3, B&N, 9618 Watson Road, 10am, \$5/non-members. For details, call 821-3823.

"A Celebration of St. Louis Writing" dinner party, hosted by the St. Louis Writers Guild, takes place Thursday, September 15, at Sunset 44 Bistro & Banquet Center. Reservations required by September 5. Call 821-3823 for details.

SLCL Mid-County Branch in Clayton conducts a giant book sale on Saturday, September 17, from 10am to 4pm. More than 2,000 books, magazines, and audio-video items will be offered. For more information, call 721-3008.

### Abbreviations:

B&N: Barnes & Noble; LBB: Left Bank Books; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; WU: Washington University.

Check the online calendar at [cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu](http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu) for more events. To advertise, send event details to [litalc@artsci.wustl.edu](mailto:litalc@artsci.wustl.edu), or call 314-935-5576.

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Financial assistance for this project  
has been provided by the Missouri  
Arts Council, a state agency, and the  
Regional Arts Commission.

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# the figure in the carpet

September 2005 Vol. 4, No. 1

Published by The Center for the Humanities  
at Washington University

## Teaching Jazz as American Culture

**A** small bead of sweat slowly worked its way down the side of my face as I waited for the musicians to walk on stage at Jazz at the Bistro. Due to the excessive heat outside, the air conditioner in the Bistro seemed to be operating at only fifty percent. As I sat there, I thought about people listening to music in small, tightly packed clubs with no air conditioners. Why did people care so much about this music that they endured stifling heat just to hear it live? Before record players or compact discs, sitting in a club might have been the only way to experience music. But, despite the fact that probably every patron had driven here in a car with an air conditioner and a CD player, the room was absolutely full. That is the power of music.

Part of the crowd at the Bistro this warm evening were participants in a Summer Institute held by The Center for the Humanities at Washington University in Saint Louis concerning one particular kind of music – jazz. The Institute, “Teaching Jazz as American Culture,” was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, having been designed for high school teachers from various disciplines interested in an

interdisciplinary humanities approach to teaching literature, film, music, fine art, and American social history via a focus on jazz. The 30 teachers in attendance came from 15 states, with a third of the participants representing local St. Louis Public Schools. As Professor Gerald Early’s parting comments to these participants made clear, the Institute was about much more than the power of music. It was also about the power of teaching. Because his presentation was so moving, I use these editor’s notes to present portions of it.

Jian Leng, Associate Director

**N**ow, a word or two before you go. I must make clear to you once again why we were all here and what we all tried to accomplish in these last four weeks. It was never my intention to encourage you to make your students fans of jazz. It was never even my intention to make any of you jazz fans who were not inclined to be so. The point of this exercise was to show that jazz was an important music, a highly influential music, at one point in its existence. And, for that matter, it still remains an important music. It was an important music in the shaping of America as we know it. I also wanted

to show that jazz was a good music, a music worth listening to and worth playing, at least at a certain time in the life of this nation. But I did not desire anything beyond that point and it was not necessary to desire anything beyond that point. In fact, personally, you could still hate jazz and think it important to teach something about your subject through it. That’s what I wanted to achieve, that realization.

I sometimes believe that jazz’s worst enemies are some of the people who are fans of it, as they occasionally exhibit all the worst qualities of the cult member: elitism, smugness, overweening conviction, intolerance of different opinions, pretentiousness, minute knowledge of absolute trivia, and the need to take themselves too seriously. Why should anybody need to know anything about jazz? That is certainly a question your students will ask. And if your students have no intention of becoming jazz musicians, it is a fair question. Is it because appreciating jazz will improve a person’s taste? If that is true, how would anyone, your students, for instance, benefit from having better taste? Is a person morally better in this life if he or she has “good taste”? Do people with good taste automatically go out and do good things in the world? Is a



Dr. Jian Leng

editor’s notes

# editor's notes continued

person who listens to John Coltrane, or Ornette Coleman, or Wynton Marsalis, or Matthew Shipp, or Jason Moran, or Keith Jarrett better than someone who listens to Nirvana, or Alicia Keys, or Brittany Spears, or Natalie Merchant, or Beyonce, or the Dixie Chicks, or Billy Joel, or Usher, or Doris Day and Perry Como? I doubt it. Jazz, in having become an elite art form, makes the same argument in its defense as the argument that is made in the defense of great literature. One should read Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, and Conrad, or Du Bois, Ellison, and Jane Austen for their own sake because they are the best works of our civilization or because the works of such authors will make you more

intelligent, more thoughtful, a more discriminating person, perhaps a more moral person. But there seems not much evidence that that is true. There certainly is no evidence that

experiencing great art will make you happier. Few people read great literary works now and it seems likely that fewer still will read them in the future. If no one ever reads them again, will the world be truly impoverished as a result? Will it really matter or make a difference in the quality of life for most people? Are people really worse off if the only art they ever experience is the popular art, the mass art, of their times? The burden of proof, it seems to me, is on the person who claims that they are. And I do not see where that is an easy or obvious argument to win.

So, I repeat that I was never interested in making anyone a fan of jazz, either you or, through you, your students. I did not organize this institute to promote jazz or to disseminate jazz or to defend jazz or to preserve jazz. If it has any or all of those effects, I shall be pleased, but that's not really why I teach the humanities. Forget about the art form as something you

should either like or dislike. Think of it purely as a cultural, artistic, and social specimen. That is all I want you to get from this. Jazz is a specimen of a special sort, a rich sort, and can be very useful to you as teachers in what you teach. In some respects, I think you would be better teaching it if you're not a fan of it or at least not wildly passionate about it. If you are more objective about it, you are more likely to think about it as a scientist ideally thinks about the work in a lab, rather than in the way a true believer thinks about his or her religion. After all, as I suggested to you from the start, jazz may not be a word that was invented to describe a form of music, but rather to describe some-thing about



*Participants of the Jazz Institute at Jazz at the Bistro.*

the spirit or consciousness that brought a particular type of music or art into the world. I think that was what guitarist Pat Martino was trying to get at in a portion of his remarks to us. Jazz is a word that describes the impulse of how to make things new for both the creator and the audience.

Why do people like music of any sort? That seems the most basic question to pose to your students. What does music do for people or to them? Do most people find an emotional escape in listening to music? Is music largely a non-intellectual or even anti-intellectual experience for people? If that is true, is that a sign that most people really do not know how to listen to music? Do people need to know more about the technical aspects of music to appreciate it better? How have people in various societies used music? How has the United States used music, and has the way it used music changed over time? Do different people in the United States use music differently? Do men experience music differently from women? Do people experience music differently because they belong to different racial or ethnic groups? Do deaf people

experience music? Do young people experience music differently from old people? Does a person's taste in music change over time or is your taste fairly firmly set by the time you are 20 or so and remains pretty much the same for the rest of your life? What does music have to do with an individual's identity? Why does a particular individual like a certain type of music? What does your taste in music say about you as a person, or what do you want it to say about you as a person? How do people form their musical tastes? Are most people prone to like the music their parents liked? If not, why do parents have so little influence on the musical tastes of their children? Is it important to most parents that their children like the same sort of music they do? Is it important to most parents that their children like the same sort of art that they do?

As historian Jacques Barzun has pointed out, music has become one of the most important art forms of the 20th century, a passion that amounts to nothing less than a cultural revolution. We might call the 20th century many things, but calling it the age of music would be quite apt. For in the 20th century more music became available to more people, music was heard in more places and at more times and in connection with more things, than at any other time in human history. We are saturated with music. Sitting in a dentist's office or being put on hold on the phone, we are likely to hear anything from a cover of a Stevie Wonder song to a movement from a late Beethoven String quartet. While waiting for a plane to take off, you can hear anything from techno music to a cover of Alanis Morissette. I don't know about you, but there are times when I want to escape from so much music. But the pervasiveness of music is a sign of its power in our culture. Music's ability to intensify human experience, from weddings to funerals, from sex to religion, gives it the power of a magical orator. At times, music in our society seems to be a drug.

Yet it must be remembered that jazz arose at the beginning of the 20th century, the century of music. The story of jazz is the story of the rise and fall of a musical



Gerald Early (right) and William Banfield  
(University of St. Thomas) at Jazz at the Bistro.

it. The needs of the creator and the needs of the audience are starkly different. And these needs are not brought together directly, but are mediated by third parties. For the musician, the pressures of the market, the realities of royalties and copyright, indeed the whole issue of property and ownership, the stresses of deal-

ing with other musicians and their limitations and preferences, the decisions made by record companies and those who promote music, where and how the person learned to play music and why the person decided to play music, the hunt for venues to play and contexts in which to present his or her music governs the nature of the music. For an individual in the audience, the availability of the music as a recording or the opportunity to see the musician in live performance, peer pressure and status, how the music is advertised, the images associated with it, all play a role in what you will hear and how you will react to it. For the musician and the audience, the critic is supremely important as a mediating force. The critic determines more than you might think because music is sold as much by the charm of words about it as it is by how it sounds.

So, why do this institute on jazz and what do I hope we accomplished this month? I designed this institute to get you to think about your subject in a fresh way and to think about the humanities in a fresh way, an interdisciplinary way where a specific subject can suddenly become a whole. What I wanted to do here was to have you see jazz from many different angles so you can comprehend, not only the complexity of the subject, but also its endless riches and how each time a new aspect of the subject is revealed, an aspect that you already know gets re-revealed and refreshed. So, you learned about jazz and the rise of the American cities, about what cities had to offer young professionals and

young artists on the make, how the city has the institutions, organizations, and, finally, the audience to support new and different art. You learned about jazz and its influence on and interaction with other arts, such as jazz and literature, where a number of writers have been influenced by this music as a creative inspiration. We noted how jazz influenced visual artists like Romare Bearden and how it influenced and was shaped by modern dance. We also saw how jazz has been a subject in Hollywood and independent films, and how it has been used in animation. And we learned how composers used jazz to score films. Finally, we examined various ways that jazz and American social history interconnected: from the segregation of women in jazz and the gendered way that music is seen, to the connection between jazz and civil rights, and jazz and black masculinity. In addition, you saw and heard live jazz performances every week, and had the opportunity to talk to professional jazz musicians about their craft. We covered many things in four weeks.

But as much as you may have learned, there is also much that we did not touch upon: think about writers like Kerouac, John Clellon Holmes, Toni Morrison, John A. Williams, William Melvin Kelly, and Yusef Komunyakaa, who have all written important works with jazz themes. Josef Skvorecky's *The Bass Saxophone*, which I think is the single greatest piece of fiction about jazz, was never mentioned once during our institute. We never talked in much depth about jazz and religion: we never discussed the jazz ministry of the late Lutheran minister, John Garcia Gensel. We did not look at the Church of John Coltrane in San Francisco. We did not consider the influence of Christianity or Judaism on jazz or why several noted black jazz musicians like Yusef Lateef, Ahmad Jamal, Art Blakey and others converted to Islam. We talked about jazz and race but we did not look specifically at the relationship between blacks and Jews in jazz, which is actually more to the point because by and large most small record label owners and most nightclub owners were Jews. Most of the whites who supported the civil rights

idiom, of an art movement, of a kind of identity that was both popular and elitist. This makes the story of jazz important, because it has become the paradigm for virtually every other musical idiom that has flourished as the nation's popular music and as an attractive form of identity for young people. But jazz also represents a markedly different story from, say, country and western, rock and roll, rhythm and blues, Hip Hop and Rap. None of these forms of music has so dramatically lost its popularity and none has become a conservatory music. It is the ways in which jazz serves as a paradigm for the formation of mass taste and the ways in which it is not a paradigm, because of its failure to maintain itself even as a music with a sizable niche audience, like, say, hardcore country music or gospel music or heavy metal, that makes it fascinating and instructive to examine and to think about. We can learn as much from an art form's failures as we can from its successes. But then again perhaps jazz hasn't failed. Who says that an art form needs a mass audience to be considered successful? In what ways can we understand how an art succeeds independent of the marketplace? Perhaps jazz has succeeded because it has become a highly elitist art. Maybe that is what God and man intended for it.

I ask again the questions why do people listen to music, and why do people make it? It must be understood that what drives a person to make music has little to do with what attracts a person to listen to

movement monetarily and helped organize benefits were Jews. So the story of jazz is quite specifically a story about two of America's most prominent minority groups, blacks and Jews. We did not look at all at contemporary jazz: who plays jazz today and why? We did not look at the influence of Rock music on jazz or the influence of Hip Hop on jazz. We did not look at contemporary women jazz players, although there are many of them. We did not look at high school jazz bands or college jazz education. We never looked at jazz and the Top Forty. After all, jazz did not simply shrivel up and die after World War II. Tunes like "Take Five," "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," and Hugh Masekela's version of "Grazing in the Grass" were big pop hits. Les McCann and Eddie Harris had a hugely successful album in 1970 that spawned the hit tune, "Compared to What." Jazz musicians like Keith Jarrett and Pat Metheny, Wynton Marsalis and Oscar Peterson, George Benson and Earl Klugh, Bob James and Kenny G, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea have all had very lucrative careers as jazz musicians and they do not, by any means, all play easy listening jazz. There is still an audience for this music and it is possible for a performer to make money from it. Exactly who does listen to jazz today and why? We never explored that. So we hardly exhausted the subject and we could have easily been here for another three or four weeks.

But I wanted you to think about the humanities anew, how a subject like jazz can tie together many things, for yourselves and your students, and how this can affect how your students think about many things. I wanted to offer this institute because I am a teacher and wanted the opportunity to work with other teachers. I know some of you are thinking that the institute was informative but how do you get your students to listen to jazz, even for a moment, a music that seems foreign to many of them. But the difficulty is the whole point. First, as teachers, we can never really reach our students through what they already know and are likely to explore without our effort or encouragement as teachers. I think, frankly, it is pointless to

teach students Hip Hop. They are already motivated to know it because it is so intricately tied up to a sense of who they are. We must move our students to look at things outside themselves and outside their experience. Otherwise, what is the point of a humanities education? That is what the humanities are supposed to do, enrich your own capacity for understanding human experience by taking you outside yourself and into something else. We must expand the sense they have of who they are. Moreover, we must teach them ownership. Jazz is not some foreign thing that belonged to their grandparents or their parents. Jazz belongs to them. It is their heritage as Americans or their heritage as black Americans, depending upon the approach you wish to take to the subject. It is their legacy. They must be taught to value their heritage. They must be taught the importance of a long memory. The nature of our throw-away culture, our culture of instant gratification, works against that. But we as teachers must work against that aspect of our culture. We are the ones who must show our students the good and lasting things in our culture. If we don't do that, who will? If we don't do that, how will our culture last? To paraphrase football legend Tom Landry, our job as teachers is to get our students to do things they don't want to do in order to achieve something they need to achieve. We must teach them to want to achieve what they need to achieve.

Finally, I designed and presented this institute in homage to my older sister who has been a high school English teacher for over 30 years and who taught me a great deal when I was a child. And to another teacher, an African American man named Lloyd Richard King, who taught me in elementary school. I will never forget him, and I am what I am today because of him. When I first entered his classroom, the song *Moon River* was very popular. One day, I remember that he had organized a play for all of us fifth-graders and had given me a major role as Abraham Lincoln. I was so nervous that I forgot my lines the day of the performance in front of our parents and when I could not think of what

to say and the other kids began to snicker I simply ran off stage. I ruined the play. I cried and cried back stage because I was so ashamed of myself and because I let Mr. King down. He had given me a big role and had counted on me. But he came and comforted me. I told him I felt so alone on the stage and I was afraid and that was why I couldn't remember anything. And he said it was all right. Everybody gets afraid sometimes. And then he said something to me I have never forgotten. "You're never alone, Gerald. I am always there with you. Because wherever you're going, I'm going your way." It was such a great thing for a teacher to say to a student. Several years later, when I dropped out of college and thought myself a complete failure, I went to see him. I told him how bad I felt, that I felt I had let him down because I was the only kid from my elementary school class to go to college. "I never want you to see me fail," I said. He told me that he felt that I would do great things in the world and that he wanted to be around to see them because, he said, "Wherever you're going, I'm going your way." My oldest daughter was learning disabled as a child. She had a very difficult time in school. In fact, I was the only person who could ever successfully teach her, and I learned everything about teaching from Mr. King. Of course, there were many times when she called herself stupid and said she couldn't learn anything. She would cry and cry. And when she did that I would always tell her what Mr. King told me. "Don't worry, kid, everything will be all right, because wherever you're going, I'm going your way." That always made her smile.

So I did this institute in the memory of my teacher, Mr. King, who made me want to be a teacher. It was the least I could do. To the man who made me possible, this is my long goodbye.

Gerald Early  
Director  
*The Center for the Humanities*