



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Donna M. Abelli

Development & Marketing Manager

t. 413/542-5084

f. 413/542-2152

dmabelli@emilydickinsonmuseum.org

Emily Dickinson Museum's Spring 2009 Schedule Showcases Poet's Influence Through Lectures, Concert, Ballet and More

AMHERST, MASS—During this time of tremendous change and uncertainty, Americans are looking for a sense of place, stability and serenity. And what better a place to find such calm than at the Emily Dickinson Museum during April, National Poetry Month? The spring program at the museum showcases the enduring influence of Dickinson and her continuing relevance to new generations of writers, artists and composers. Organized as part of The Big Read, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the center of the American culture, the events will encourage the whole community to get involved.

Highlights of the new season include a discussion of “The Future of Poetry” by Poetry Foundation President John Barr; a concert celebrating the release of a new recording of composer and philanthropist Gordon Getty’s musical composition *The White Election* (which was inspired by 32 Dickinson poems), featuring an appearance by the composer himself; performances of the ballet *Emily of Amherst*, an original creation of Amherst Ballet; and a course on Emily Dickinson’s poetry. There is an activity to inform and delight everyone.

“This exciting range of programs showcases Dickinson’s wide-ranging influence and validates her enduring legacy. It all begins with her words, but they resonate for so many people in so many different ways,” said Jane H. Wald, executive director of the Emily Dickinson Museum. “Thanks to the NEA and the Poetry Foundation, we can present these outstanding programs as we mark the 250th anniversary of Emily Dickinson’s beloved Amherst.”

The following events scheduled for the spring are part of The Big Read and funded by the NEA. Activities marked with an asterisk (*) are part of the town of Amherst’s 250th anniversary celebrations.

- Saturday, April 4, 4 p.m.—Poetry Foundation President John Barr will kick off The Big Read with a lecture on “The Future of Poetry” followed by Marilyn Nelson, past poet laureate of Connecticut, reading a selection of favorite poems.
- Saturday, April 18, 3 p.m.—Soprano Lisa Delan and pianist Kristin Pankonin will perform Getty’s *The White Election*. This concert in Dickinson’s church marks the release of a new recording of the work 20 years after the original recording, and the composer will be on hand for the performance.
- Tuesdays, April 21 and 28, May 5 and 12, 7 to 9 p.m.— In collaboration with the Jones Library, the museum will host “Emily Dickinson’s Poetry 101,” a class for those who’ve always wanted to learn about her poetry but were afraid to ask.
- Wednesdays April 29, May 6 and 13, 3 to 4:30 p.m.—Also in collaboration with the Jones Library, the museum will offer the course “Emily Out Loud: Oral Interpretation with Emily Dickinson’s Poetry,” designed to open the doors of Dickinson’s work to young people ages 8 to Young Adult.
- Saturday May 2, 10 a.m.—Award-winning author Jane Yolen will read from her book *My Uncle Emily* and sign copies. *
- Friday, May 15, 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, May 16 and 17, 2 and 7 p.m.—Amherst Ballet, in collaboration with the museum, will present *Emily of Amherst: A Ballet in Four Acts*, an interpretation of the life of the poet in dance and with readings from letters and poems, accompanied by original musical settings based on sheet music from the Dickinson family library. *
- Saturday, May 16, 1 to 4 p.m.—The annual Emily Dickinson Poetry Walk and Open House will take place at the Homestead and five locations around Amherst, ending at her gravesite. Five area poets (Deborah Gorlin, Daniel Hall, Lisa Olstein, Pat Schneider and Ellen Watson) will share their favorite Dickinson poems at each of the sites. A reception and book-signing by the poets will follow at the Homestead. *

The Emily Dickinson Museum, comprising the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens, is devoted to the story and legacy of poet Emily Dickinson and her family. Both properties are owned by the Trustees of Amherst College; a separate Board of Governors charged with raising its operating and capital funds oversees the museum. The Dickinson Homestead was the birthplace of the poet (1830-1886). The Evergreens was the 1856 home of the poet’s brother and sister-in-law, Austin and Susan Dickinson.

The Emily Dickinson Museum is located at 280 Main St. in Amherst, Mass. The official museum Web site is www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m.; the museum is closed on major holidays.

The Big Read: The Poetry of Emily Dickinson is part of a pilot initiative created by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Poetry Foundation to celebrate great American poets and the nation’s historic poetry locales.

Please see attached backgrounder for specific locales and times for each event.

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