

Hill-Stead MUSEUM

35 Mountain Road / Farmington, CT 06032 / 860.677.4787 / www.hillstead.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Event: Hill-Stead Museum Announces Return of Sunken Garden Poetry Festival

Place: Hill-Stead Museum, 35 Mountain Road, Farmington, CT 06032

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Sunken Garden Poetry Festival Returns to Hill-Stead Museum in Summer 2008

Hill-Stead Museum names Jeffrey Levine the Festival's new Artistic Director

Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, CT, announces that its annual summer-long Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, the museum's largest public program, will return this summer following a one-year hiatus. **Jeffrey Levine**, poet, publisher, and teacher, has assumed the role of **Artistic Director** for the 16th season of the Festival, which will include some of the most talented poets and musicians in the country. Levine will be responsible for organizing the Festival and for spearheading a fundraising campaign to ensure that the Festival thrives.

Jeffrey Levine is the founder of Tupelo Press, an independent literary press located in Dorset, VT, one of the most important publishers of poetry and literary fiction in the country. An award-winning poet, Levine has an MFA in poetry and teaches English at Kingswood-Oxford School in West Hartford, CT. He resides with his family in West Hartford. "I fervently believe this Festival is one of the most important and enduring cultural mainstays of the Hartford region, and is fundamental to our artistic well-being," Levine said. "I look forward to helping produce a summer filled with delight and inspiration for our many current fans and to enchant those who have yet to discover this venue that Galway Kinnell has called 'a little paradise for poetry'."

Historically, the Festival has charmed an audience of more than 5,000 each summer, and has engaged a listening audience of 1,250,000 via National Public Radio's Weekend Edition Saturday, and five Connecticut public radio stations.

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The 2008 Festival will be six weeks long, every other Wednesday, June - August. All events will be held in Hill-Stead's magnificent garden setting, with pre-performance discussions and conversations with the artists beginning at 5 pm. Rain venue will be on site.

Cindy Cormier, Hill-Stead Director of Education and Curatorial Services, says, "I am thrilled to have found in Jeffrey Levine someone so impressed with the special nature of this place, dedicated to renewing and cultivating this important part of our program at Hill-Stead for the past 15 years. Jeffrey brings to us a rich and varied background in poetry, music, education, and law. I cannot think of anyone better qualified to restore this vitally important Festival."

Hill-Stead's literary history dates from the time of museum architect and founder Theodate Pope Riddle, whose literary house guests included Henry James, Edith Wharton, Thornton Wilder, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Archibald McLeish, and who regularly held salon-type concerts in the Drawing Room. The Sunken Garden Poetry Festival picked up 15 years ago where Theodate left off, with a roster of poets including Grace Paley, Billy Collins, Galway Kinnell, Yusef Komunyakaa, Sharon Olds, Major Jackson, Maxine Kumin, Rennie McQuilkin, Bessy Reyna, Jane Hirshfield, Stanley Kunitz and Marilyn Nelson, among many others.

Past Festival readers have praised Hill-Stead's illustrious literary history:

"The Sunken Garden Poetry Festival has become legendary during its fifteen years of existence, an indispensable part of the literary landscape. Poetry's ability to reach out to a broader public depends on exactly this kind of event, which draws a large audience because of the combination of place (Hill-Stead Museum's unparalleled beauty), and a strong curatorial sense for both the selection of poets and the accompanying musicians. There are few such series in the country, and this festival is a jewel in the crown."
—*Jane Hirshfield, Mill Valley, CA*

"A cultural phenomenon." —*Billy Collins, New York*

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A **National Historic Landmark** and an Official Project of **Save America's Treasures**, Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, CT, is a stop on the **Connecticut Art Trail** and a member of **Connecticut's Historic Gardens**. The period rooms are open for tours Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am – 4 pm, November through April, and 10 am – 5 pm May through October. Grounds are open daily 7:30 am-5:30 pm. For tour and program information, call 860.677.4787 or browse www.hillstead.org.

Hill-Stead is noted for its 1901 33,000-square-foot house filled with art and antiques. Pioneering female architect **Theodate Pope Riddle** designed the Colonial Revival-style house, set on 152 hilltop acres, to showcase the **Impressionist masterpieces** amassed by her father, Cleveland iron industrialist Alfred A. Pope. Hill-Stead is one of the nation's few remaining representations of **early-20th-century Country Place Estates**. Collections include original furnishings, paintings by Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, James M. Whistler and Mary Cassatt, as well as numerous works on paper and Japanese woodblock prints. Stately trees, seasonal gardens, over three miles of stone walls and woodland trails for walks or cross-country skiing accent the grounds. A centerpiece of the property is the c. 1920 sunken garden designed by landscape architect Beatrix Farrand, today the site of the renowned Sunken Garden Poetry Festival.

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