

Hill-Stead MUSEUM

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ROBERT PINSKY OPENS SEASON 16 of the SUNKEN GARDEN POETRY & MUSIC FESTIVAL *Music by Merge, a Groundbreaking Combination of Spoken Word and Jazz*

FARMINGTON, CT— Robert Pinsky will kick off the 16th season of Hill-Stead Museum’s summer-long Sunken Garden Poetry Festival on June 11, 2008. Author of numerous volumes of poetry (including *The Figured Wheel: New and Collected Poems 1966-1996*, a Pulitzer Prize nominee), books about poetry (including *Poetry and The World*, nominated for the National Book Critics’ Circle Award), and translations of poetry (including the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award and Howard Morton Landon Prize winner *The Inferno of Dante*), Robert Pinsky has earned praise for his dynamism, imagination and range. Appointed United States Poet Laureate in 1997, Pinsky served an unprecedented three terms – his first two years generated such enthusiasm that the Library of Congress appointed him to a third. In 1999, Pinsky was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Other achievements include The PEN/Voelcker Award, the William Carlos Williams Prize, the Lenore Marshall, and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture’s 2006 Jewish Cultural Achievement Award in Literary Arts. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Threepenny Review*, *American Poetry Review*, and *The Best American Poetry* anthologies. He is the poetry editor for the online magazine *Slate*, writes the weekly “Poet’s Choice” column for the *Washington Post*, and teaches in the graduate writing program at Boston University.

Merge, described by acclaimed composer and musician David Amram as “exciting and highly creative... another step forward in celebrating the marriage of poetry and music,” unites the verse of Cassandra Cleghorn with the music of saxophonist/flutist/composer Erik Lawrence and his band Hipmotism.

The gates open at 5:30 pm. Performances begin at 6:30 pm. Boxed suppers will be available for purchase, or participants can bring their own food; *al fresco* dining will be allowed on the West Lawn and in select locations in the Sunken Garden. Admission is free; on-site parking is \$10 per car. Audience members are asked to bring blankets or lawn chairs for seating in and around the garden. For more information browse www.hillstead.org or call 860.677.4787 ext 111.

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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. Described by United States Poet Laureate Billy Collins as a "cultural phenomenon," the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival picked up 16 years ago where Theodate left off, with a roster of poets including Grace Paley, Galway Kinnell, Yusef Komunyakaa, Sharon Olds, Philip Levine and Marilyn Nelson, among many others. After a one-year hiatus in 2006, the critically acclaimed Festival returns in full force in 2008, much to the delight of poets and poetry aficionados nationwide. Performances in 2008 will take place every other Wednesday evening as follows:

- **June 11: Robert Pinsky; Merge**
- **June 25: Coleman Barks; Eugene Friesen**
- **July 9: Billy Collins; Sheila Jordan/Cameron Brown Bass and Voice Duo**
- **July 23, August 6 and August 20: Save the Dates! Details pending.**

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, 10 am – 5 pm May - October and 11 am – 4 pm, November – April. Grounds are open daily 7:30 am-5:30 pm. For tour and program information, browse www.hillstead.org or call 860.677.4787.

Noted for its 1901 33,000-square-foot house filled with art and antiques, Hill-Stead is one of the nation's few remaining representations of **early-20th-century Country Place Estates**. 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. 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 stonewalls 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 Jones Farrand, today the site of the acclaimed Sunken Garden Poetry Festival.

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