



40 YEARS Authors on Stage 250 AUTHORS

Authors' Memories

2020—Virtual program

Helen Fremont, *The Escape Artist*

Authors on Stage is one of the best literary events I've ever attended. The program features a variety of terrific books, fascinating stories, and interesting authors who reflect on their own writing process. Few programs are as well-organized, informative and downright entertaining as Authors on Stage, and no wonder—it's created and run by Wellesley women!

2019

Susan Cooper, *The Shortest Day*

The best thing about Authors on Stage, for this author, is the quality of the questions asked by the audience. They're true *readers*, those Wellesley listeners, and I propose to include them in the book I'm currently writing, which is called, suitably, *Celebrations*. It's a recollection of all the people and things that have given joy to my long life: a counter-balance to pandemic gloom, I hope—as indeed is your fortieth anniversary. Happy birthday, Wellesley College Authors on Stage: please never stop!

Marjan Kamali, *The Stationery Shop*

My heart was so full after participating in the Authors on Stage event at the Wellesley College Club. It was a joy to speak in such a beautiful venue with inspiring fellow authors and a warm and wonderful audience. Every detail was thought through and considerate: from the pick up at my home, to the hospitality of the committee members and event organizers when we arrived, to our coffee and chat before the author talks, to the thoughtful introductions and management. I loved hearing my fellow authors speak and sharing my own story with everyone. And afterward, I enjoyed chatting with the attendees (and heard many a moving tale as I signed books!). Of course there was also the wonderful lunch in a space looking out at a quintessentially New England setting. I've been invited to many venues for my books, but the the Authors on Stage event at Wellesley was one of the most meaningful events in which I've participated and one I'll always cherish.

2019

Julia Phillips, *Disappearing Earth*

The Authors on Stage program gave me an experience I will always be grateful for and never forget. It was my very first event for my first book, and those attending could not have been warmer or more generous with a nervous baby author. After I spoke, one woman in the front row of the club passed me a handwritten note of encouragement; I've kept that note at my desk all the time since as a reminder of how kind people can be. Here's hoping for 40 more years of Authors on Stage, and 40 more after that!

2017

Anne Fadiman, *The Wine Lover's Daughter: A Memoir*

If a writer were to dream up the perfect audience, it would be the kind found at Authors on Stage: packed room, attentive readers, smart questions, and even (the icing on the cake) interest in actually buying a few books!

I've been lucky enough to come to Wellesley twice. In 1998, I spoke about *Ex Libris*, a book about reading and language, to a group of women who were passionate about reading and language. One of my co-presenters that year was David Michaelis, who had just published his magnificent biography of N.C. Wyeth. We ended up reading each other's books and kept in touch. David later contributed—brilliantly—to a journal I edited: a happy consequence I owe entirely to Authors on Stage.

In 2017, I returned to Wellesley after writing a memoir called *The Wine Lover's Daughter* about my father, Clifton Fadiman, a critic and radio host whose name had rung few bells when I'd talked about him elsewhere. But at Wellesley, there was immediate recognition. Of course!

2016

Sebastian Smee, *The Art of Rivalry*

To have the opportunity to speak at Authors on Stage—alongside the wonderful Jane Alexander and Willard Spiegelman—was such a delight! The atmosphere at Authors on Stage is so warm and congenial. I remember the buzz and the bubbling good humor. Appropriate, I suppose, that collegiality should be the prevailing tone in a college setting, but it's rare to find that quality at author events. I put it down not just to the setting, but the organizers, the format, and above all the intelligence and generosity of the audience.

Andre Dubus III, *Gone So Long*

It was a joy and an honor to take part in the Wellesley College Authors on Stage series. To speak to a room filled with such devoted readers and supporters of books and libraries was a gift to me and the writing life, and I will cherish that memory always-

2015

Lauren Willig, *The Other Daughter*

As an all girls' school alumna, speaking at WCAB, to an audience of brilliant women, felt like coming home! Thank you so much to Wellesley College Authors on Stage for creating such a unique and welcoming opportunity for authors and readers to come together. While I was researching my latest book, *Band of Sisters*, about a group of intrepid Smithies in the Somme during World War I, I bumped into the little-known Wellesley College Relief Unit—a group of Wellesley women who braved war-torn France to offer aid to embattled French women and children. Reading about all they risked and accomplished, I have never felt so proud to be part of that ongoing sisterhood of educated women. Being on stage at WCAB truly makes one feel that connection and its continuance across the generations.

2013

Kevin Cullen, *Whitey Bulger: America's Most Wanted Gangster and the Manhunt That Brought Him to Justice* (Co-author Shelley Murphy)

What I remember most from that event were the brilliant women with whom I shared the stage, which seemed especially appropriate, given the setting, a college that has educated so many authors of importance and substance. Having worked with her for so long, I knew my colleague Shelley Murphy was an outstanding journalist, one of the best reporters of her era. I also felt privileged to listen to Megan Marshall talk about her vivid biography of Margaret Fuller, the journalist and transcendentalist, and Rebecca Miller, whose delightful *Jacob's Folly* so skillfully recreates a Jewish ghetto in Paris. Before we took to the stage, Rebecca and I got talking and realized we had lived in Ireland at the same time and had frequented with our spouses and children the same pub in County Wicklow for long, languorous Sunday afternoon family meals. We're pretty sure our kids raised hell together, running around the Roundwood Inn as people tried to enjoy their Sunday dinners. A small world, indeed.

2009

Katherine Hall Page, *The Body in the Sleigh*

Appearing at Authors on Stage for *The Body in the Sleigh* (2009) has been a highpoint of this long career. It has remained my favorite book for many reasons, including this honor at the book tour's start. Hannah Pakula was the other author—*The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and the Birth of Modern China*, which brought back a vivid memory of the elegant, tiny, very powerful woman who spoke to us in Alumnae Hall in 1968! Looking at the list of those who have appeared since my late dear friend John McAleer in 1981, the first one, is a testament to those who have worked to provide us with so many exceptional literary experiences. Congratulations AOS!

Robert Pinsky, *Essential Pleasures: A New Anthology of Poems to Read Aloud*

It's pleasing to hear about that very talented young puppy Chiasson reading his work in that series this spring. Reminds me of being on the platform with David Ferry, and recalling my splendid senior colleagues in the old days along with David, such as Helen Storm Corsa and Patrick Quinn.

Peter Canellos, *Last Lion: The Fall and Rise of Ted Kennedy*

I have a strong personal association with Authors on Stage, knowing the enjoyment it has brought to my mother and aunt over four decades. So it was a special honor to be able to speak before the lunch crowd, jam-packed as always, back in 2009. I knew it would be a friendly gathering, but it was also the most thoughtful, informed and genuinely curious group of readers I encountered in many months of events promoting our Boston Globe biography of Ted Kennedy. The men and women in the audience knew Kennedy like a neighbor, having grown up through the course of his career, and weren't afraid to share their thoughts—the more challenging the better. I still remember it as a near-perfect day: the beautiful setting and the truly interesting exchanges with so many of Sen. Kennedy's most observant constituents.

Megan Marshall

2005, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism*

2013, *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life*

My paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Metcalf Marshall, was a Wellesley graduate (1915), and one of the most profound influences on my life. As a children's librarian in my hometown, Pasadena, she not only supported my love of reading but also introduced me to the backrooms of libraries. When I started doing research in archives, I felt very much at home. My biography of Margaret Fuller was dedicated to her. Coming to speak on the Wellesley campus to other alumnae of the college has been profoundly meaningful to me, another kind of homecoming. The conversations over lunch after the book talks always made me think of her daily life as a college student and the many fascinating mealtime conversations she must have had, ranging over many topics and leading to lifelong friendships. I was lucky to be able to join in a century later!

2008

Reeve Lindbergh, *Forward from Here: Leaving Middle Age & Other Unexpected Adventures*

Neil Raphel of Brigantine Media, my wonderful publisher, has passed on your very kind message about the Authors on Stage Program, which I attended in 2008. What a delightful time it was! I came to you at the very beginning of a book tour for a new book about turning 60, and at that point I wasn't quite sure how *Forward From Here* would be received, though it was a lot of fun to write. Your group was so welcoming and so enthusiastic that I went on my way thoroughly heartened, to enjoy the rest of my tour.

I'm sending the best of good wishes for your 40th anniversary celebration, and my profound thanks on behalf of this writer and the others who are lucky enough to be part of your program. You are such a gift to us all!

2004

Tom Perrotta, *Little Children*

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Wellesley College. What a treat to discuss my novel *Little Children* with such a thoughtful and engaged community of readers, students and faculty alike.

Thanks again for having me, all the way back in 2004, which feels another world.

2002

Julia Glass, *Three Junes*

I will never forget my day at "Authors on Stage," back in spring of 2002, because it was the *very first time* I stood before an audience to speak about a book that I had written. What a wonderful way to make a literary debut—though I wouldn't have been there if my publisher hadn't kindly agreed to release a few boxes of my first novel before the official pub date. I remember exactly what I wore, how badly my knees were shaking . . . and how generously and warmly my two stagemates, the far more seasoned authors Da Chen and Alexander Stille, coached and cheered me on, then flanked me like a pair of brothers as the three of us signed our books for readers—another first for me.

I remember spotting Da Chen's obituary, entirely by chance, last year or perhaps the year before. What a lovely man he was; I was sad to learn of his death, and I remembered immediately how funny and sweet he was that day in Wellesley.

2001

Margot Livesey, *Eva Moves the Furniture*

The Wellesley College Club was one of the first places to welcome my novel *Eva Moves the Furniture* and I recall with pleasure the eloquent, intelligent audience. My fellow author was talking about the human genome which, at that time, was something we were all just beginning to pay attention to. I remember thinking that he and I were both bringing the news, but from very different places. And how wonderful to have an audience that could appreciate both of us.

1991

Bill Martin, *Cape Cod*

I always looked forward to presenting a novel to the Wellesley College Authors on Stage program. I love big audiences of enthusiastic book lovers. I love great conversations with readers before and after the show. And Wellesley had it all. *Cape Cod* was published on the first day of spring, 1991. Shortly after, I launched it from the Wellesley stage, and it's been going ever since. Fortunately, so have I. Thanks to all of you at Authors on Stage. Keep up the good work.

1988

Jan Brett, *The First Dog*

Authors live a somewhat solitary life. Wellesley's Authors on stage gave valuable insight on how our process works when I heard Susan Dodd also speaking that day about Mamaw a novel of an outlaw mother. She seemed incredulous that this deceased notorious character Jesse James from the past could grip her mind and unleash her imagination. I was writing about a ten-year-old boy in the Pleistocene. I have been curious about how these books materialize and carry us away ever since.

Judith Martin

1983, *Miss Manner's Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior*

2007, *No Vulgar Hotel: The Desire and Pursuit of Venice*

I was immensely buoyed when Mr. Ferry wrote on one of my freshman English papers that I was obviously going to become a writer. Never mind that he added that he hoped that by then, I would not be quite so glib.

Decades later, at a reunion, I confessed to him that although I did become a writer, I have not truly given up glibness, as I found I could make a living from it. To my relief, he condoned my current work anyway.

Congratulations on the 40th anniversary. I look forward to reading about the other authors.