



WILTON LIBRARY

137 Old Ridgefield Road
Wilton, CT - 06897
www.wiltonlibrary.org
203.762.3950

NEWS

Contact: Janet Crystal

Direct dial number: 203-762-6324

E-mail: jcrystal@wiltonlibrary.org
www.wiltonlibrary.org

Wilton Historical Society Contact: Kim Mellin

Phone: 203-762-7257

Email: kmellin@wiltonhistorical.org
www.wiltonhistorical.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wilton Library and Wilton Historical Society get creative with their Scholarly Series beginning Feb. 11

Wilton, CT –In the fourteenth year of the collaboration between Wilton Library and the Wilton Historical Society, the scholarly lecture series will focus on the theme, “Connecticut Creativity: Vision + Imagination + Inspiration.” From influencing American music to American art, from creating imaginary children’s characters to inventing imaginative showmanship, this year’s series celebrates the arts – music, illustration, storytelling, performance art, and even the circus – homegrown in Connecticut. In light of the ongoing health concerns, the five-part series will be held virtually on Thursday evenings, beginning on Feb. 11, from 5 to 6:30 p.m., with every session requiring a separate registration.

Elaine Tai-Lauria, executive director of Wilton Library, said of the series, “Given the events of the past year, we are pleased to share an uplifting celebration of Connecticut’s ingenuity and creativity.”

Kim Mellin, co-director of the Wilton Historical Society agreed, “It’s a good time to shine a light on some of the great things in Connecticut’s past that have contributed to our arts and entertainment.”

The five Connecticut Creativity programs will be held virtually and hosted by either the library or the historical society as follows:

- **Feb. 11, Charles Ives and the American Music Identity – Dr. Gil Harel:** During this program, Dr. Gil Harel (PhD, Brandeis University) will discuss Danbury-born composer Charles Ives as a founder of a distinct American music idiom. Charles Ives may very well be considered one of the most important American composers of the modern period. His considerable wealth is cited as a factor in allowing the composer to write abstract and complex works without having to worry about

ticket sales. Today, he is regarded as a seminal American composer whose pioneering work with polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatory elements and more has cemented his place in the canon. Gil Harel is a musicologist and music theorist whose interests include styles ranging from the western classical repertoire to jazz. He is a popular guest lecturer in this scholarly series. At Naugatuck Valley Community College, Harel conducts the college chorale, a cappella ensemble, teaches music history and theory, and serves as musical director of theater productions. The moderator is Max Gabrielson. The program is sponsored by Nancy and Bill Brautigam and hosted by Wilton Library.

- **Feb. 25, The Story of Famous Artists School and its Connecticut Roots – Stephanie Haboush Plunkett and Magdalen Livesey:** Stephanie Haboush Plunkett and Magdalen Livesey will look at the lasting influence of the Famous Artists School and the artists who contributed to it on the world of illustration from the twentieth century until today. Famous Artists School – “the art school for everyone, everywhere” – began in 1948 in Westport, then home to a number of well-known artists and illustrators. Al Dorne, a prolific illustrator, had the idea to create an art instruction program for distance learning based on the techniques and experience of other successful artists. Eleven artists, including Norman Rockwell and Stevan Dohanos, contributed material for the comprehensive courses. Stephanie Haboush Plunkett is the Deputy Director and Chief Curator of the Norman Rockwell Museum. Magdalen Livesey is a writer and freelance editor. She and her husband, Robert Livesey, owned Famous Artists School from 1982 to 2016. The moderator is Steve Hudspeth. The program is sponsored by Dr. Mark and Linda Rubinstein and hosted by Wilton Library.
- **March 11, The World of Maurice Sendak: A Virtual Tour of the Maurice Sendak House and Studio – Lynn Caponera and Dr. Jonathan Weinberg:** Lynn Caponera and Dr. Jonathan Weinberg will discuss the world of the famous illustrator, author, and Ridgefield resident, Maurice Sendak. Many individuals have fond memories of the numerous works and illustrations of Maurice Sendak, but few know of his enduring artistic legacy and creative process. Caponera and Weinberg will explore the Sendak world, discuss the Sendak creative process, and his Ridgefield, CT home and studio where he lived and worked for forty years. The recipient of numerous coveted awards, Maurice Sendak remains the most honored and beloved children’s book author in history. Lynn Caponera, Executive Director and President of the Board of The Maurice Sendak Foundation, had a 40-year history with the celebrated artist. Jonathan Weinberg, Ph.D., Curator of The Maurice Sendak Foundation is an artist and art historian. The moderator is Max Gabrielson. The program is sponsored by Allison and Rob Sanders and hosted by Wilton Historical Society.
- **March 25, The Greatest Showman – Fiction vs Fact! The REAL Story Behind the REEL Story! – Kathleen Maher:** Kathleen Maher will captivate guests with an engaging journey through key elements in the P.T. Barnum movie, *The Greatest Showman*, and will share numerous bits and pieces of history that will “set the record straight.” From the depiction of Barnum’s childhood in Connecticut to his final bow with the Greatest Show on Earth, Maher will expand on the tales set in the screenplay and reveal the truth to the remarkable stories of struggle and triumph that are even more fantastic. Maher has 33 years of experience working at museums and is celebrating 22 years at the historic Barnum Museum where she is Executive Director. She holds gubernatorial appointments to the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Council, the State Library, and the Museum of Connecticut History. The moderator is Steve Hudspeth. The program is sponsored by Rebecca Lin and hosted by Wilton Historical Society.
- **April 8, Gillette and Holmes: Theatrical Innovation from Connecticut to London and Back Again – Emily Gifford:** In this final lecture of the series, Emily Gifford will explore William Gillette, a colorful Connecticuter whose contributions to global popular culture have persisted for over a century. Gillette, from a prominent family in Hartford's Nook Farm, enjoyed early success in the theater as an actor, playwright and director. He also made advances in sound effects and pioneered the use of new lighting technologies to enhance storytelling, such as the dramatic use of lighting blackouts. It was “his” Sherlock Holmes, however, that brought him the most recognition, as well as financial rewards. Gillette used some of his income to create a

wonderfully eccentric castle overlooking the Connecticut River, a residence as ingenious as any Holmes could have imagined. Emily Gifford is an independent historian, educated in Connecticut at Trinity College (BA), Yale Divinity School (MA), and Central Connecticut State University (MA). The moderator is Steve Hudspeth. The program is sponsored by Phil Lauria and Elaine Tai-Lauria and hosted by Wilton Historical Society.

Additional information about each lecture is on the library's website at www.wiltonlibrary.org, along with the registration links. Registration is required separately for each of the lectures. Zoom links will be sent to registrants in advance of the programs. There is no charge however a \$10 suggested donation may be made to the hosting institution right from the individual registration pages.

For information, visit www.wiltonlibrary.org or www.wiltonhistorical.org or call Wilton Library at 203-762-6334.

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Caption: Wilton Library and Wilton Historical Society's fourteenth collaborative Scholarly Series, "Connecticut Creativity: Vision + Imagination + Inspiration," begins virtually on Thursday, Feb. 11, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Dr. Gil Harel (pictured here) will kick off the series with "Charles Ives and the American Music Identity." The series continues with four Thursday evening lectures, from February through April 2021; either the library or the historical society hosts each lecture. Registration is required for each individual program in order to receive the Zoom link. Visit the library's website at www.wiltonlibrary.org for all the lectures, speaker and topic details, and registration links, or call 203-762-6334 for information. Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT; www.wiltonlibrary.org, 203-762-3950; Wilton Historical Society, 224 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT, www.wiltonhistorical.org; 203-762-7257.