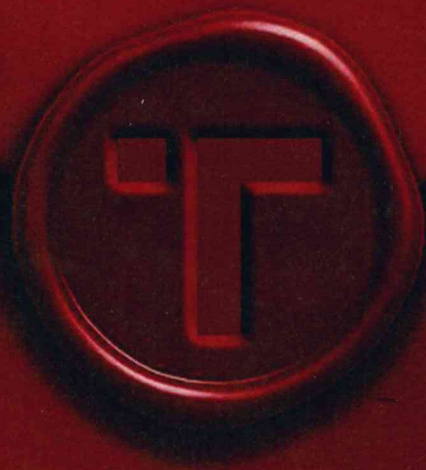


VALENTINES & WINES



Thursday, February 12, 2026
Torggler Lecture Hall
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

A collaborative event presented by
the Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center and TheatreCNU

Letter Presentations



Ansel Adams to Cedric Wright Presented by Bruce Bronstein

Bruce Bronstein is the Executive Director of the Ferguson Center for the Arts. He brings extensive experience in arts administration, production, and community engagement.

Emily Dickinson to Susan Gilbert Presented by Virginia Browning

Virginia Browning is a senior Theatre major (Acting concentration) with a minor in Film Studies. Ms. Browning is a recipient of two Independent Research Grants from the Office of Research and Creative Activity, which supported the creation of tonight's program.

Richard Burton to Elizabeth Taylor Presented by Rob Lange

Dr. Rob Lange served as Dean of Admission at Christopher Newport University for 14 years before assuming the role of Vice Provost in 2025. His graduate degrees are from The College of William & Mary and SUNY College at Buffalo. He is in the Athletics Hall of Fame for basketball at his undergraduate alma mater, Daemen University (NY).

F. Scott Fitzgerald to Zelda Fitzgerald Presented by Danny Devlin

Danny Devlin is a 2006 graduate of Christopher Newport University and additionally holds an MFA from VCU and a Ph.D. from the University of Kansas; all degrees are in theatre disciplines. Devlin is an award-winning theatre artist and educator, and is a proud member of the Actors' Equity Association.

Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald Presented by Laura Devlin

Laura B. Devlin is a Program Coordinator for the Department of Music, Theatre, and Dance and also serves as the resident Intimacy Director and a dialect coach for TheatreCNU. She has her BA in Theatre Performance from the University of Kansas and a Graduate Certificate in Arts Administration from the University of Connecticut.

John Steinbeck to Thom Steinbeck Presented by President Bill Kelly and First Lady Angie Kelly

William G. Kelly is the Sixth President of Christopher Newport University and a nationally respected educator and military leader. He is a lifelong public servant with nearly four decades of distinguished service in the U.S. Coast Guard, and the proud father of two sons. President Kelly has set the University on a course to be anchored in excellence in all that it does.

Angie Kelly's caring heart is reflected in her professional career and her devotion to service and volunteering. She has been married to President William G. Kelly for 38 years, with whom she shares two sons and three grandchildren. She proudly serves as the First Lady of Christopher Newport University, where she advocates for the arts as well as the health and well-being of students.

Frida Kahlo to Diego Rivera Presented by Yindra Garcia Sarduy

Originally from Cuba, Yindra Garcia Sarduy is a school librarian who has long been an admirer of Frida Kahlo's iconic life and art. Diego Rivera is high on her list of reprehensible but brilliant men and she's very excited to read Frida's breakup letter to him.

George Bernard Shaw to 'Stella' Beatrice Campbell Presented by Baxter Vendrick

M. Baxter Vendrick, Jr. serves as Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement and University Advancement at CNU, where he leads initiatives to strengthen relationships between the university and its alumni, supports fundraising efforts, and enhances programs that connect graduates with their alma mater. He is in his eleventh year at CNU and is a familiar face within the broader CNU community.

Felicia Bernstein to Leonard Bernstein Presented by Rachel Holland

Dr. Rachel Holland is both an accomplished teacher and sought-after soprano soloist. Dr. Holland is a frequent soloist with both regional and national organizations around the country. At Christopher Newport University, Dr. Holland teaches applied lessons, vocal pedagogy, foreign language diction, and opera survey.

Auguste Rodin to Camille Claudel Presented by Vantony Jenkins

Vantony is a former acrobat with the Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus. He retired after dropping his partner from 600 feet directly into the mouth of a lion. He now lives a quieter, less stressful life as the Production Manager at the Ferguson Center for the Arts.

Anais Nin to The Collector Presented by Ann Mazocco Bellicci

Ann Mazocco Bellicci (Professor of Dance) is a choreographer, dance educator, performer, filmmaker, and scholar. Mazocco Bellecci presents her choreography nationally and internationally, while her scholarly publications focus on Haitian ritual choreography, sacred landscapes, African diasporic folkloric performance, and co-authored collaborative performance praxis.

Katharine Hepburn to Spencer Tracy Presented by Liz Warters

Born and raised in New York and Connecticut, Liz Warters holds a BA in Art History from Ohio Wesleyan University. Liz's paternal grandmother was good friends with Katharine Hepburn, who served as a bridesmaid in her grandmother's wedding in 1927.

Evelyn Waugh to Laura Herbert Presented by John Nichols

Dr. John Nichols is Associate Professor of English, Director of Film Studies, and Director for the Center for Effective Teaching at Christopher Newport University.

John Ruskin to Effie Gray Presented by Kip Redick

Dr. Kip Redick is Professor of Philosophy and Religion and the Dr. Tracey T. Schwarze Endowed Professor of Humanities at Christopher Newport University. His specific research interest centers on the study of wilderness trails as sites of spiritual journey.

James Baldwin from the essay "Take Me to the Water" from No Name in the Street Presented by Brandon Jones

Brandon Jones currently serves as Christopher Newport University's Senior Director of School Partnerships and Outreach. Through innovative programs and meaningful partnerships, he focuses on developing opportunities and providing pathways designed to guide and help budding leaders progress on their journey to their "next".

Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh Presented by Vince Joseph

Dr. Vincent Joseph was named after Vincent van Gogh. Vince's mom was pregnant when she and his father visited the Vincent van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. His mom fell in love with the artist and named her baby boy Vincent. Thirty years later, Vince and his wife, Terry, visited the same museum. Staff had to usher them out so they could finally turn out the lights.

Production Team

Director | Denise Gillman, Professor of Directing

Producer | Holly Koons, Torggler Executive Director

Researcher | Virginia Browning, CNU theatre student

Visual Specialist | Carly Ault, Visual Arts Coordinator



Special Thanks To...

All of the presenters in tonight's program, who volunteered their time and talent to bring these passionate letters to life.

Dr. David Salomon and the Office of Research and Creative Activity for independent research grants for Virginia Browning.

Kiera Hill of Vino Culture Wine Shop in Norfolk, VA.

Shawn Ellis, and Torggler team members Joan Dobson, Chevon McClenney, Cristi Hart, and LeeAnna Adams.

Credits:

The majority of letters presented, as well as the introductions accompanying them, were drawn from Shaun Usher's *Letters of Note*, volumes I and II (Canongate Books, Great Britain, 2013 and 2016), or related publications: *Letters of Note Love* and *Letters of Note Art* (Canongate Books, Great Britain, 2020 and 2021, respectively). Other sources include Michael Bird's *Artists' Letters: Leonardo da Vinci to David Hockney* (White Lion Publishing, London, 2019) as well as *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* (Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., London, 2003).

