

## Nashville Public Library Literary Award Gala 2006

honoring

### John Updike

Saturday, November 4, 2006

Grand Reading Room ~ Nashville Public Library

#### Gala Chairs

Mrs. Dave A. Alexander, Jr. ~ Mrs. Douglas Cruickshanks, Jr.

Dreams come true. Without that possibility, nature would not incite us to have them.

~ John Updike

As a novelist, poet, short story author, playwright, children's book author, literary critic, art critic and essayist, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Updike is one of the world's most versatile, serious and prolific writers. Though his writing style and subjects vary greatly, he is committed to addressing the moral, social and cultural conditions of his generation. With astonishing clarity each of his works reveals the complex reality of life in modern America.

His life-long dedication to the writing life is exemplified by his more than 60 books of fiction and non-fiction. In 1954, after graduating from Harvard University where he was the editor of the famed *Harvard Lampoon*, he spent a year at Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Arts in Oxford, England. In 1955 he joined *The New Yorker* staff, writing editorials, poetry, stories, and criticism. That would follow is one of the most extraordinary bodies of literary work to come from an American author of any generation.

His first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair* (published in 1959), was well received and, with the support of a Guggenheim Fellowship, he was able to begin his ambitious novel, *Rabbit, Run* (1960). *Rabbit, Run* introduced the reader to Updike's most memorable character, Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom whom we would follow from his youth through the social and sexual upheavals of the 1960s, to later periods of his life, and to final decline in the books, *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990). He received the National Book Award for *The Centaur* (1963) and in 1968 published *Couples*, which created a national sensation and was on the bestsellers list for more than a year. In *Bech: A Book* (1970), he introduced us to imaginary novelist Henry Bech who would reappear in Updike's fiction for years to come. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s numerous novels and stories were published including a trilogy retelling *The Scarlet Letter*, a prequel to Hamlet entitled *Gertrude and Claudius*, and *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984). His most recent novel is *Villages* (2004). *Still Looking: Essays on American Art* was published by Knopf on November 8, 2005.

John Updike has received countless awards and honors including two Pulitzer Prizes for *Rabbit is Rich* and *Rabbit at Rest*. At age 32, he became the youngest person ever elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He is among a very small group of notables who have been honored with both the National Medal of Art and the National Medal for the Humanities. John Updike was born and raised in Pennsylvania until going to Harvard University where he graduated *summa cum laude*. He has lived most of his adult life in Massachusetts, in the same corner of New England where so much of his fiction is set.

#### John Updike is the author of:

*The Carpentered Hen* (1958)  
*The Poorhouse Fair* (1959)  
*The Same Door* (1959)  
*Rabbit, Run* (1960)  
*The Pigeon Feathers* (1962)  
*The Magic Flute* (1962)  
*The Centaur* (1963)  
*Telephone Poles* (1963)  
*The Ring* (1964)  
*Olinger Stories* (1964)  
*A Child's Calendar* (1965)  
*Of the Farm* (1965)  
*Assorted Prose* (1965)  
*The Music School* (1966)  
*Couples* (1968)  
*Midpoint* (1969)  
*Bottom's Dream* (1969)  
*Bech: A Book* (1970)  
*Rabbit Redux* (1971)  
*Museums and Women* (1972)  
*Buchanan Dying* (1974)  
*A Month of Sundays* (1975)  
*Pick Up the Pieces* (1975)  
*Tossing and Turning* (1977)  
*Marry Me* (1977)  
*The Coup* (1979)  
*Problems* (1979)  
*Too Far to Go* (1979)  
*Rabbit is Rich* (1981)  
*Bech is Back* (1982)  
*Hugging the Shore* (1983)  
*The Witches of Eastwick* (1984)  
*Facing Nature* (1985)  
*Roger's Version* (1986)  
*Trust Me* (1987)  
*S.* (1988)  
*Self-Consciousness* (1989)  
*Just Looking* (1989)  
*Rabbit at Rest* (1990)  
*Odd Jobs* (1991)  
*Memories of the Ford Administration* (1992)  
*Collected Poems* (1953-1993)  
*Brazil* (1994)  
*The Afterlife* (1994)  
*A Helpful Alphabet of Friendly Objects* (1996)  
*Golf Dreams* (1996)  
*In the Beauty of the Lilies* (1996)  
*Toward the End of the Line* (1997)  
*Bech At Bay* (1998)  
*More Matter* (1999)  
*Gertrude and Claudius* (2000)  
*Licks of Love* (2001)  
*Rabbit Remembered* (2001)  
*The Complete Henry Bech* (2001)  
*Americana and Other Poems* (2001)  
*Seek My Face* (2002)  
*The Early Stories* (1953-1975)  
*Villages* (2004)  
*Still Looking* (2005)