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KICK-OFF EVENT MARKS THE START OF YOUNG AUDITORIUM'S 2021 NEA BIG READ PROJECT

The Hoard Historical Museum hosts FREE Activity Bag Pick-Up – Saturday, April 3rd | 10:00am-Noon

March 10, 2021— With over 20 events spanning the entire month of April, UW-WHITEWATER'S YOUNG AUDITORIUM is proud to officially launch the 2021 Big Read Project with a free kick-off event on Saturday, April 3rd at The Hoard Historical Museum in Fort Atkinson. Starting at 10:00am, the BIG READ ACTIVITY BAG PICKUP will serve as the starting point for a series of community-based experiences throughout the spring designed to show how sharing a good book can broaden our understanding of our world, our community, and ourselves. Managed by Arts Midwest, the Big Read initiative offers grants to support innovative community reading programs designed around a single book. This year's selection, *The Latehomecomer* by Kao Kalia Yang, focuses on the experience of Hmong families making the journey from the war-torn jungles of Laos to the overcrowded refugee camps of Thailand and onward to America.

"This is the best account of the Hmong experience I've ever read—powerful, heartbreaking, and unforgettable."
—Anne Fadiman, author of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

"A narrative packed with the stuff of life." — Entertainment Weekly

On Saturday, April 3rd starting at 10:00am, interested parties are invited to stop by the Hoard Museum (401 Whitewater Ave, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538) for the official BIG READ ACTIVITY BAG PICKUP (while supplies last). Containing a free copy of *The Latehomecomer*, a copy of Yang's children's book *A Map Into The World*, an official 2021 Big Read t-shirt, and a series of materials and take-home activities designed to complement the novel's major themes, the activity bag has everything you'll need to take part in Young Auditorium's BIG READ events. Activities will include children's chalk activity, all-ages letter writing project, share your story immigrations story collection, and a StoryWalk at the Fort Atkinson Library.

The bag pickup is just the beginning! A full listing of all Big Read activities and experiences, including children's programs based on the author's children's work '*A Map Into The World*', can be found at www.youngauditorium.wordpress.com. Highlights include the following:

- [Literature to Life: *The Latehomecomer* - Wednesday, April 7th – 7:00pm | Totally FREE Digital Content](#)

Literature to Life is a performance-based literacy program that presents professionally staged verbatim adaptations of American literary classics. Placed in the context of our 2021 Big Read selection, *The Latehomecomer*, enjoy staged readings from this important work centered on the Hmong refugee experience.

- Author Presentation: Kao Kalia Yang - Friday, April 9th – 7:00pm | Strictly Digital - Totally FREE Content

Join us for a live, virtual conversation with award-winning Hmong-American author Kao Kalia Yang. The author of this year's Big Read selection, *The Latecomer*, Yang will discuss her insights into the deeply personal subject matter while discussing her inspiration for her 2008 novel.

- Author Presentation Kid's Edition: *A Map Into The World*- Friday, April 9th – 5:00pm
Prior to the author presentation, gather the family as Yang offers an exclusive reading of her children's book, *A Map Into The World*. Experience the heartfelt story of a young girl seeking beauty and connection in a busy world.

- Borealis Dance: Threads of My Cloth - Wednesday, April 28th – 7:00pm | Totally FREE Digital Content

Deeply rooted in historical research and personal accounts, the stories of Hmong refugees are brought to life on stage through the thoughtful movements of Borealis Dance.

- Big Read Finale Event – “Immigrant Stories” Courtesy of Old World Wisconsin | May 1, 2021

Why do people leave everything they know with only a few possessions to start a new life in Wisconsin? Historical and contemporary immigration stories unpack this question. Join us at Old World Wisconsin for the finale event as we explore immigration through an immigrant trunk, folk art, and firsthand accounts!

Free copies of *The Latecomer* will be available at participating Big Read libraries starting on Monday, April 5, 2021 (while supplies last). A full list of library partners can be found below:

Lennox Library at UW Rock County	Clinton Public Library	Edgerton Public Library	Matheson Memorial Library (Elkhorn)
Eager Free Public Library (Evansville)	Fontana Public Library	Dwight Foster Public Library (Fort Atkinson)	Hedberg Public Library (Janesville)
Jefferson Public Library	Barrett Memorial Library	Milton Public Library	Orfordville Public Library
Andersen Library at UW-Whitewater	Irvin L. Young Memorial Library (Whitewater)		

Thank you to our Big Read Event partners:

Hoard Historical Museum	The Book Teller	Rotary Botanical Gardens	Old World Wisconsin
Fairhaven Lecture Series	UW-Whitewater Children's Center	American Association of University Women	UW-Whitewater Philanthropy & Alumni

For more information the 2021 Big Read project, including details about the author and book selection, community and library partners, and a complete listing of all Big Read events, please visit www.youngauditorium.wordpress.com.

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the Arts Endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit arts.gov to learn more.

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Arts Midwest promotes creativity, nurtures cultural leadership, and engages people in meaningful arts experiences, bringing vitality to Midwest communities and enriching people's lives. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 35 years. For more information, please visit artsmidwest.org.

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