Ermapalooza!

University of Dayton

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Ermapalooza!

Roy Blount Jr. will headline an all-star 2016 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, which includes a staged reading of new one-woman play, "Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End."

Roy Blount Jr., who's been described as “a humorist and social critic in the tradition of Mark Twain, Will Rogers, H.L. Mencken and W.C. Fields,” will kick off the University of Dayton's Erma Bombeck
Writers’ Workshop next spring.

A master storyteller and prolific writer, Blount has written two dozen books and is a familiar voice on NPR’s *Wait, Wait .. Don’t Tell Me!* He’s part of an all-star workshop lineup that includes a staged reading of the new one-woman play, *Erma Bombeck: At Wit’s End*, starring Barbara Chisholm, who most recently appeared in the Oscar-winning film *Boyhood*.

The workshop is slated for March 31-April 2, 2016, and online registration opens at noon (EST) Tuesday, Dec. 1. A link will be posted at [www.humorwriters.org](http://www.humorwriters.org) at that time. The registration fee is $425 with a number of free scholarships available for University of Dayton students, beginning in January.

Besides Blount, the workshop’s keynoters include:

- **Amy Ephron**, bestselling novelist, journalist and contributing editor at *Vogue*;

- **Kathy Kinney** (known for her iconic role as “Mimi” on *The Drew Carey Show*) and **Cindy Ratzlaff** (marketing guru behind *The South Beach Diet*). The longtime friends are the creative force behind the *Queen of Your Life* book series, calendar and blog; and

- **Leighann Lord**, stand-up comedian, actress, commentator and author who’s known as “the Urban Erma.”

The humorous and poignant *Erma Bombeck: At Wit’s End* is billed as “a look at one of our country's most beloved voices, who captured the frustrations of her generation by asking, ‘If life is a bowl of cherries, what am I doing in the pits?’” Twin sisters Allison and Margaret Engel wrote the script for the play, which is receiving its world premiere at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., Oct. 9-Nov. 8 as part of the Women’s Voices Theatre Festival. While Chisholm’s performance is open only to workshop registrants, the playwrights hope to bring the one-woman show to Dayton, Ohio, at a later date.

The workshop will once again feature “Pitchapalooza” — described as the “*American Idol* for books, only kinder and gentler.” Arielle Eckstut and David Henry Sterry’s wildly popular, entertaining event has drawn thousands of people into bookstores, writing conferences and book festivals all over the country — and captured attention from *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and NPR. Writers get one minute to pitch a book idea before a panel. The judges pick a winner, who will receive an introduction to an agent or publisher appropriate for the book idea.

Wendy Liebman, a semifinalist on season nine of *America’s Got Talent* and a frequent guest on late-night TV shows, will teach a stand-up comedy boot camp and serve as emcee for the attendee stand-
up comedy night.

The workshop also will include a special panel, “Ask the Agents,” moderated by Brian Klems, online editor of Writer’s Digest, and a new add-on session, “Speed Dating for Writers,” where writers meet briefly with a variety of pros to learn writing and publishing tips.

Erma Bombeck’s humor and influence on contemporary writers will receive special attention at the workshop. Former Good Morning America producer Ed Miller and the workshop’s popular emcee Patricia Wynn Brown will offer “Mayhem in the Morning: Laughing With Erma,” featuring some of Bombeck’s funniest television clips and a conversation with the Bombeck family. Humorist and feminist scholar Gina Barreca, a former keynoter, will teach a workshop, “Erma 101,” geared to workshop newcomers.

The workshop’s faculty includes two other former keynoters — Emmy Award-winning writer and author Alan Zweibel and comedian and author Judy Carter — among the 25 experienced writers and publishing professionals. Here’s the full slate:

- **Elaine Ambrose**, founder of Mill Park Publishing and author or co-author of 10 books, including *Midlife Cabernet: Love and Laughter After 50* and *Menopause Sucks*
- **Gina Barreca**, feminist scholar and author of nine books, including the soon-to-be-released *If You Lean In, Will Men Just Look Down Your Blouse? Questions and Thoughts for Loud, Smart Women in Turbulent Times*
- **Tracy Beckerman**, nationally syndicated humor columnist and the author of two books, including *Lost in Suburbia: A Momoir: How I Got Pregnant, Lost Myself and Got My Cool Back in the New Jersey Suburbs*
- **Nancy Berk**, radio personality, host of the celebrity podcast *Whine At 9* and online entertainment columnist for *Parade* magazine. Her book *College Bound and Gagged* can be seen in the Tina Fey movie *Admission.*
- **David Braughler**, founder and CEO of Braughler Books
- **Patricia Wynn Brown**, performer, producer and author of *Hair-A-Baloo: The Revealing Comedy and Tragedy on Top of Your Head* and *Momma Culpa: One Mother Comes Clean and Makes her Maternal Confession*. She has performed her humor-memoir Hair Theater shows nationally.
- **Judy Carter**, comedian, speaking coach and bestselling author of *The Comedy Bible, The Message of*

- **Rachel Ekstrom Courage**, literary agent at Irene Goodman Literary Agency

- **Nick Courage**, book marketer, author and co-founder of Littsburgh, Pittsburgh's literary community

- **Arielle Eckstut**, agent-at-large with Levine Greenberg Literary Agency in New York and the author of nine books, including *The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published*

- **Sorche Elizabeth Fairbank**, literary agent at Fairbank Literary Representation, which she founded in 2002

- **Rachelle Gardner**, literary agent at Books & Such Literary Agency

- **Katrina Kittle**, author of five novels, creative writing teacher and manuscript consultant

- **Brian A. Klems**, online editor of *Writer's Digest* and author of the popular parenting book, *Oh Boy, You're Having a Girl: A Dad's Survival Guide to Raising Daughters*

- **Adair Lara**, writer, teacher and author of 11 books, including *Naked, Drunk and Writing: Shed Your Inhibitions and Craft a Compelling Memoir or Personal Essay*


- **Anna Lefler**, humorist, comedy writer and author of two books, including her latest novel *Preschooled*

- **Wendy Liebman**, stand-up comic who’s performed on *Carson, Letterman, Leno, Fallon, Kimmel, Ferguson* and *Hollywood Squares*. She was a semi-finalist on *America’s Got Talent*

- **Joel Madison**, sitcom writer for more than a dozen TV shows, including *Roseanne* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*

- **Cathryn Michon**, best-selling author, actress, Hollywood screenwriter and director who stars in and directs *Muffin Top: A Love Story*

- **Ed Miller**, former *Good Morning America* television producer

- **Shannon Olson**, director of creative writing at St. Cloud State University and author of two best-
selling novels, *Welcome to My Planet: Where English is Sometimes Spoken* and *Children of God Go Bowling*

- **Susan Pohlman**, writing coach/instructor, freelance writer and author of the memoir, *Halfway to Each Other*

- **Sharon Short**, executive director of the Antioch Writers' Workshop and author of a coming-of-age novel, *My One Square Inch of Alaska*, two mystery series and a collection of humorous essays

- **David Henry Sterry**, author of 15 books — from memoir to young adult fiction — actor and regular contributor to *The Huffington Post*. Co-wrote *The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published*

- **Alan Zweibel**, producer, novelist and Emmy Award-winning writer who has worked on such productions as *Saturday Night Live*, PBS' *Great Performances*, and *It's Garry Shandling's Show*

If past workshops are any indication, the popular event will fill up quickly. The 2014 workshop sold out in 12 hours.

The 2016 workshop is expected to bring more than 350 beginning and professional writers to Dayton. Why the enormous appeal? The workshop has attracted such household names over the years as Dave Barry, Art Buchwald, Nancy Cartwright, Don Novello, Gail Collins, Garrison Keillor and Alan Zweibel, but the personal involvement of Erma Bombeck's family makes the event at her alma mater memorable and sets it apart from the myriad other writers' workshops offered across the country. Alumnus Bill Bombeck and his children, Betsy, Andy and Matt, have regularly attended the workshops. In 2010, the workshop was featured on *CBS Sunday Morning*.

The Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop is co-sponsored by the University of Dayton's Alumni Association, College of Arts and Sciences, and Bookstore; National Society of Newspaper Columnists; Books & Co.; Dayton Marriott Hotel; Dayton Mailing Services; and the Erma Bombeck Writers’ Workshop Endowment.

For media interviews, contact Teri Rizvi, founder and co-director of the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, at erma@udayton.edu.