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## February 4, 2013: Playwright Edward Allan Baker Presents His Work: Spring 2013 Gwen Frostic Reading Series

Department of English

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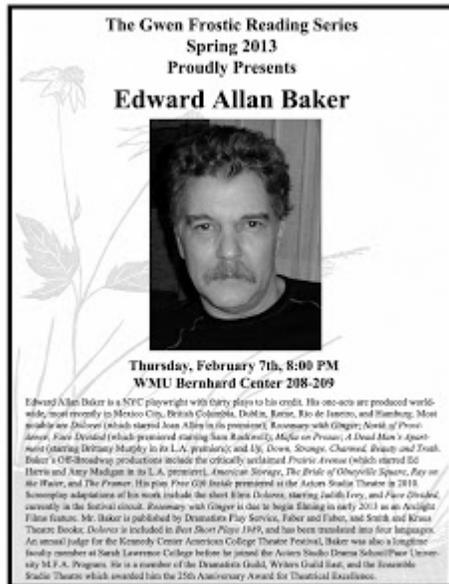
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Monday, February 4, 2013

[Playwright Edward Allan Baker Presents His Work: Spring 2013 Gwen Frostic Reading Series](#)



We welcome you to join us for the first reading of the Spring 2013 Gwen Frostic Reading Series. We're honored to have playwright Edward Allan Baker present his work this Thursday, February 7th. The reading will take place at the WMU Bernhard Center, in room 208-209, starting at 8:00 PM. We look forward to seeing you there.

Posted by [Dustin](#) at [11:10 PM](#) [No comments](#):

Labels: [Gwen Frostic Reading Series](#), [playwriting](#)

[English Dept. Master Faculty Specialist and poet Judith Rypma will read from her latest book, Looking for the Amber Room](#)

Often referred to as the "Eighth Wonder of the World," the Amber Room was commissioned by Prussia's Frederick I in the early 18th century. With over 100,000 pieces of various shades of amber inlaid with mosaics, the room caught the eye of collector and amber aficionado Peter the Great, who would eventually receive it as a gift from Frederick's son. In its new Russian home, the room fascinated Empresses Elizabeth and Catherine the Great, so much so that the latter commissioned artisans to add additional elaborate mirrors, Romanov crests, gemstones, and 70 *objets d'art* that dazzled all who saw it in its presumably permanent home in a palace outside St. Petersburg.

But the story, far from ending here, evolved into one of the greatest mysteries of the 20th century. It is this story of the world's most famous missing treasure that English Dept. Master Faculty Specialist and poet Judith Rypma will explore in a reading at **7 p.m. February 18** from her latest book, ***Looking for the Amber Room*** (Emerald Unicorn Press). "It's a tale of stolen art, but it's also a legend that has enthralled—and continues to frustrate—armies of treasure hunters who at this very moment are scouring four countries in search of it," Rypma says.

As Rypma explains, the room remained in Catherine's Palace at Tsarskoe Selo (now Pushkin) until 1941, when the Nazis marched into the area, disassembled and seized the room's panels, transported them to Prussia, and displayed the Amber Chamber there until 1945. But as the Allies advanced on Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), the room "simply vanished." Since then, endless questions, investigations and books have pursued the mystery, which, according to Rypma, "involves possibilities ranging from sunken ships and underground bunkers to hidden salt mines and billionaire collectors. There are even murders associated with the search."

These mysterious possibilities and theories play a role in Rypma's poems, which also trace amber from its prehistoric origins through its medieval popularity (so much that fishermen who stole a piece were hanged) and its development as a room that played a role in the lives of three Russian rulers. She also tracks the theft, the room's curators, attempts to hide it, and even Hitler's fascination with it.

The poems, ranging from lyric free verse to haiku to prose poetry, reflect Rypma's deep love for her subject in a way that almost makes the reader forget how much research went into the book. "I'm accustomed to doing research for poetry, but I had never envisioned that I would spend years doing it for this book. But the material out there is voluminous."

Rypma, therefore, is justifiably proud of internationally renowned amber expert Dr. Patty Rice's "seal of approval" in terms of accuracy, as well as quality. "I loved the book and the way Rypma cleverly manages to work in everything in poetic form," Rice notes.

Professor Rypma's reading is sponsored by the English Department. It is free and open to the public. It will take place in 3025 Brown Hall, followed by a book signing and refreshments. ***Looking for the Amber Room*** is available locally at Kazoo Books on Parkview Ave. Contact Rypma at [rypmaj@wmich.edu](mailto:rypmaj@wmich.edu).

Posted by [Joanne Beverage](#) at [11:20 AM](#)