

Alexandria Times

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Alexandria
COMMUNITY MEDIA

Welcoming Poe to Alexandria is a Halloween tradition

On Oct. 29 and 30, David Keltz returns to the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum for the annual “Poe in Alexandria” performance, a Halloween tradition.

Keltz will bring Edgar Allan Poe to life, sharing stories, poems and literary criticism, all from memory as a performance, not a reading. Poe himself never lectured at Alexandria’s Lyceum, but he lectured at other Lyceums and had multiple connections to Alexandria.

Keltz’s first performance as Poe was on Halloween night in 1991 at Poe’s grave in Baltimore. Since 1998, he has performed his one-man show at the Alexandria History Museum. His Poe performances have not stayed confined to the United States, as he opened the International Poe Festival in Prague with a performance of the poem “The Bells.”

Keltz’s Alexandria performance often begins with Poe’s poem “The Tell-Tale Heart.” Other crowd-pleasers include “The Cask of Amontillado,” “Annabel Lee” and “The Ra-

ven.” Given Poe’s many connections to Alexandria, and the Lyceum’s 19th-century position as a place of learning and culture, this historic building is a natural location for this long-held tradition.

Poe’s mother, Eliza Poe, was a talented singer and actress. In 1802, she and her husband Charles Hopkins traveled with their troupe to Alexandria to perform five weeks of shows at the Alexandria Theatre. The Alexandria Theatre was located on the north side of the 400 block of Cameron Street, across from Gadsby’s Tavern.

Later, Edgar Allan Poe corresponded with Daniel Bryan, who served as Alexandria’s postmaster for more than three decades. Bryan was a poet in his spare time, and in the December 1841 issue of Graham’s Magazine, Poe wrote “A Chapter on Autography” in which he analyzed people’s handwriting.

Of Bryan’s handwriting, Poe noted, “Mr. Bryan has written some very excellent poetry, and is appreciated by all admirers of ‘the good old Gold-

smith school.’”

Bryan began correspondence with Poe in 1842, sending him poems with the hope that Poe would publish them in Graham’s Magazine. Poe had moved on from Graham’s, and the poems Bryan sent never found their way to Poe. Poe wrote to Bryan at least twice. One letter survives today in the Iowa State Historical Archives.

A later connection was his attending Episcopal High School’s 1847 final exercises. He treated those in attendance to a recital of “The Raven.”

Poe’s final connection to Alexandria was that his aunt and mother-in-law, Maria Clemm – Poe married his first cousin, Virginia – lived here for a time.

“After Poe’s death in October of 1849, Mrs. Clemm was left without any source of income,” the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore website states. “She survived largely from the generosity of Poe’s friends and admirers.”

As we celebrate Halloween this year, we invite you



PHOTO/TOM RADCLIFFE

David Keltz as Edgar Allan Poe.

to experience a taste of the “Master of the Macabre,” an Alexandria tradition.

You can purchase tickets to David Keltz’s performance as Edgar Allan Poe at alexandriava.gov/shop. Tickets are \$25 per person and \$20 for Historic Alexandria members and volunteers.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.