

Things To Do

The Mattatuck Museum is hosting an immersive Valentine's Day masquerade

By [Tracey O'Shaughnessy](#), Staff Writer Jan 20, 2026



Guests dressed in their finest at the Edgar Allan Poe - Gothic Romance Masquerade event. Hosted at the Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown, by Grymm Studios: Immersive Events.

Courtesy of Jennifer Schulten/Mattatuck Museum

For as long as there have been screens, there have been [Edgar Allan Poe](#) stories to feed them ideas.

Film adaptations of his stories go as far back as [D.W. Griffith](#) in 1914, whose "[The Avenging Conscience](#)" dipped liberally from Poe works from "The Bells" to "The Tell-Tale Heart" to "Annabel Lee." More recently, Gothic enthusiast [Mike Flanagan](#)'s Netflix series, "[The Fall of the House of Usher](#)" and [Scott Cooper](#)'s "[The Pale Blue Eye](#)" testify to the enduring power of the man the [Poetry Foundation](#) called "the architect of the modern short story."

Now Waterbury's [Mattatuck Museum](#) is blending Poe's macabre blend of romance and horror into an immersive masquerade event to take place on Valentine's Day.



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"[The Nevermore Masquerade: A Gothic Romance Immersive Event](#)," will be presented Feb. 14 in collaboration with Hartford's [Grymm Studios](#). According to its website, the company creates "immersive events that blend together professional comedic storytelling through improvisational character actors with other-worldly interactive elements and special effects."

The conceit of the event is to place attendees at the center of Poe's short story, "[The Masque of the Red Death](#)," according to a news release. Poe's story is a gothic allegory about the inevitability of death, even for the wealthy, like Prince Prospero, who tries to escape a deadly plague by throwing a lavish masquerade to evade the deadly pestilence.



A recent Edgar Allan Poe - Gothic Romance Masquerade event hosted at the Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown, by Grymm Studios: Immersive Events.

Courtesy of Jennifer Schulten/Mattatuck Museum

"Guests are welcomed into Prince Prospero's lavish court, where revelry reigns and where the Master of the Macabre himself, Edgar Allan Poe, presides over the evening's mysterious unfolding events," according to the release. The event will feature "lavish costumes, spirited dancing, decadent hors d'oeuvres and indulgent libations" in an evening in which "a dark and captivating mystery emerges, guided by an eccentric cast of characters," according to the release.

Costumes are required for the event and "should reflect a classic masquerade aesthetic," according to the release, which suggests "timeless interpretations...including Gothic, Victorian, Steampunk and 1920s to 1940s formal wear." Prince Prospero's personal DJ, Rave-N, will provide "an electrifying blend of electro-swing and electro-classical dance music," according to the release.

Jason Foberg, the museum's director of education, said Poe's "themes of love, morality and the human ego are ones that complement a darkly romantic alternative to the usual Valentine's Day celebrations.

"Our visitors are looking for more immersive experiences, ways to escape the everyday," Foberg said. "The masquerade ball offers them an opportunity to step into a different identity — the attendees won't just be attending a party, they are going to be participating in a story. This kind of experience fosters a sense of play and mystery — something we are very excited to see in action that night."

Jan 20, 2026

[Tracey O'Shaughnessy](#)

Features Reporter

Tracey O'Shaughnessy is a features reporter for CT Insider. A Pulitzer Prize-nominee, she is a two-time recipient of the Sigma Delta Chi award from the Society of Professional Journalists.

A native of Lexington, Mass, she is a graduate of Wesleyan and American universities who has one more than 11 national first place awards for art criticism from the Society for Features Journalism, four Wilbur Awards for her columns on religion, a Missouri Lifestyle Award for her features, and several New England Newspaper Association Awards for her columns.

She's won two Publick Occurrences awards from the New England Newspaper Association and was selected as one of the 11 best arts journalists in the country by the Dorothea and Leo Rabkin Foundation.

In her free time, she enjoys reading, biking, fitness and playing with her dog, Riley. Her literary heroes are Flannery O'Connor, Jane Austen, William Trevor and Frederick Douglass.