



Advance Program Notes

The Crooked Road: Mountains of Music Homecoming Sunday, June 11, 2017

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

The Crooked Road: Mountains of Music Homecoming

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 2 PM

FLOYD RADIO SHOW, ON THE ROAD

Moss Arts Center Cube

featuring

Bill and the Belles

Amythyst Kiah

The Jeff Little Trio

The Earl White Stringband

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 5 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION: CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS REUNION

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

Join the conversation as Clinch Mountain Boys past and present reunite and share their stories, moderated by author, performer, and Stanley Brothers music historian Gary Reid of Roanoke, Virginia.

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 7:30 PM

MOUNTAIN MUSIC LEGENDS:

THE STANLEY BROTHERS LEGACY

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

featuring Ralph Stanley II and the Clinch Mountain Boys

with special guests Ricky Skaggs and Larry Sparks

Floyd Radio Show, On the Road

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 2 PM

Moss Arts Center Cube

Each month the Floyd Country Store in Floyd, Virginia, produces a new show in this old-timey variety show format. Each program features guest hosts and the finest musical acts from around the region, from storytelling banjo players to flatpicking guitarists to gospel choirs and hard-driving string bands, original radio plays and comedy bits, ads, jingles, and more. For more information, visit floydradioshow.com and floydcountrystore.com.

BILL AND THE BELLES

With striking three-part harmonies and masterful instrumentation, Bill and the Belles skillfully breathe new life into the sounds of early country music. At the foothills of the Blue Ridge and the forefront of old-time music, Bill and the Belles, of Johnson City, Tennessee, continue to further the music traditions of their region. From sentimental Southern ballads to the popular songs of Tin Pan Alley or regional fiddle breakdowns, a Bill and the Belles show is a celebration of the diversity country music once represented. With a rapidly growing reputation throughout the Southeast, Bill and the Belles have shared the stage with many national acts, including Hot Rize, the Gibson Brothers, and Larry Sparks. They continue to play alongside America's top country and roots music artists as the resident band for historic radio program *Farm and Fun Time*, presented by Radio Bristol and the Birthplace of Country Music. In just a short time, Bill and the Belles have brought their show to the audiences of television and radio broadcasts, as well as to several major festivals around the country. Lifelong musicians Kris Truelsen, Grace Van't Hof, Kalia Yeagle, and Karl Zerfas bring to the stage an uplifting show unlike any other, full of humor, high spirits, and all-around revelry. It's clear this group shares a rare musical connection and deep love for the music, and their excitement is contagious. Bill and the Belles are hitting the road with fervor, eager to share their music with new audiences. Kalia Yeagle's (fiddle, guitar, and vocals) expressive and versatile fiddling is quickly positioning her at the forefront of a new generation of acoustic musicians. She takes inspiration from her upbringing in Alaska, where long winters and strong, diverse communities have produced a music scene unlike any other. Her music is undeniably of the mountains, both the Chugach and the Blue Ridge. As a scholar of Appalachian Studies, she has the privilege of studying the rich musical heritage of the region with special interest in early country music's pioneering female artists. Kris Truelsen (guitar, tenor guitar, and vocals) was raised in the mountains of Colorado and has been listening to, playing, and paying dues to country and old-time music since his early teens. As the first to earn a master's degree in Appalachian Studies from East Tennessee State University, he continues to expand and share his knowledge of traditional American music. Truelsen is the producer of WBCM Radio Bristol and host of *Farm and Fun Time*, allowing his music, philosophy, and enthusiasm to touch audiences internationally. Grace Van't Hof (banjo, banjo ukulele, and vocals), from western Michigan, discovered the banjo in high school when she built a five-string prototype that won second place in a statewide Science Olympiad. Van't Hof is inspired by artists ranging from Charlie Poole to Puccini, and her banjo playing provides equal parts drive and subtlety to Bill and the Belles. A founding member of Grammy-nominated band Della Mae and longtime touring musician, Van't Hof's career has taken her around the world and continues to do so. Karl Zerfas (bass) of Manhattan, Kansas, grew up listening to his father sing Kansas cowboy and prairie songs of the early 20th century. Now a sought after bassist across east Tennessee and western North Carolina, Zerfas has proven himself to be one of the best up-and-coming roots music bassists in the country. His early American music repertoire is vast, drawing influence from classic country, early jazz, and hillbilly music. His unique perspective and solid groove shape the rhythmic backbone of Bill and the Belles.

AMYTHYST KIAH

A professed Southern Gothic, alt-country blues singer/songwriter based in Johnson City, Tennessee, Amythyst Kiah's commanding stage presence is only matched by her raw and powerful vocals—a deeply moving, hypnotic sound that stirs echos of a distant and restless past. Accoutered interchangeably with banjo, acoustic guitar, or a full band (Her Chest of Glass), Kiah's toolbox is augmented by her scholarship of African-American roots music. Her eclectic influences span decades, drawing heavily on old-time music (such as Mississippi Sheiks, Son House, Jimmie Rodgers, Olla Belle Reed, and the Carter Family), inspired by strong R&B and country music

Floyd Radio Show, On the Road, continued

vocalists from the '50s, '60s, and '70s (Big Mama Thornton, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Mahalia Jackson, Dolly Parton, Patsy Cline, and Loretta Lynn), and influenced by contemporary artists with powerful vocal integrity (Adele, Florence and the Machine, Megan Jean and the KFB, and Janelle Monae). Recent tours in Scotland and the U.K. have seen Kiah performing for audiences at the Americana Music Association U.K. Showcase, the Southern Fried Festival, the Cambridge Folk Festival, the Edinburgh Jazz Festival, and SummerTyne Americana Festival. She is a crowd favorite at Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion in the U.S. and has performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival. Provocative and coolly fierce, Kiah's ability to cross the boundaries of blues and old-time through reinterpretation is groundbreaking and simply unforgettable.

THE JEFF LITTLE TRIO

With few exceptions, the piano does not play a prominent part in Appalachian or Americana music and is rarely the lead instrument. But Jeff Little is an exception and a remarkable one. His distinctive two-handed style, much influenced by the mountain flat-picked guitar tradition, is breathtaking in its speed, precision, and clarity. Little's involvement with fiddle tunes, old-time country, and traditional blues dates to his growing up in Boone, North Carolina, where his family owned a music shop. The shop was a regular gathering place for musicians who would stop by to pick a few tunes. At an early age Little would regularly sit in with many of the musicians from the region, including one of America's most influential musicians: Doc Watson. These influences helped shape Little's approach to the piano, which is based on these deep musical traditions. But there is also an echo of more contemporary mountain tradition in his performances. Today Little and his trio stay busy traveling the country, performing concerts with an energy and dedication to their music that is evident at every show. Performances include the Smithsonian Institution, the National Folk Festival, American Piano Masters, Merlefest, and many festivals, performing arts centers, colleges, and music venues throughout the U.S. He has also taken his traditional piano style around the world on U.S. government goodwill tours, performing in Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Oman, France, and Tanzania. Little has released four CDs and been featured on NPR and PBS many times. In 2014 he was inducted into the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame. Joining Little in this performance is Steve Lewis, an award-winning guitar and banjo player from Todd, North Carolina and one of the most respected acoustic musicians in the country. Lewis is well-known for his flat picking on guitar and his mastery of the five string banjo. He has won many championships for his guitar and banjo playing. Some of the prestigious events include the Walnut Valley Nationals, Merlefest, the Galax Old Time Fiddlers Convention, Renofest, and the Wayne Henderson Guitar Competition. Lewis is also a two-time national champion on the banjo. Rounding out the trio is upright bass master Josh Scott from Fleetwood, North Carolina. Scott has been featured on stage and in the studio with many critically acclaimed artists of acoustic and Americana music.

THE EARL WHITE STRINGBAND

The Earl White Stringband's self-titled album is a fabulous collection of traditional and new old-time music. It features one of few Black American fiddlers playing Appalachian old-time music in modern times. Fiddlin' Earl White has been a prominent figure in the old-time music and dance world for more than 40 years and has a vast collection of fiddle tunes from across the country. The Earl White Stringband does an excellent job of perpetuating the sounds of an era in our past when Blacks and Whites alike relished in the deep musical traditions of the Appalachian Mountains. The energetic, straight-ahead, driving style of Fiddlin' Earl White; the percussive and distinctive thump of Mark Olitsky's banjo; the steady rhythm and bass runs of Adrienne Davis' guitar; and the backbone and bottom of Joe "Bass" Dejarnette's bass just makes you want to move your feet and dance. You won't be disappointed if you're looking for good old-time stringband music. This long-awaited album will fill that void and leave you longing for more.

Mountain Music Legends: The Stanley Brothers Legacy

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 7:30 PM

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

featuring Ralph Stanley II and the Clinch Mountain Boys
with special guests Ricky Skaggs and Larry Sparks

The Crooked Road leads to the Moss Arts Center with this spectacular celebration of heritage music uniting three bluegrass greats to honor the legacy of the Stanley Brothers and their Clinch Mountain Boys. With the passing of Dr. Ralph Stanley in 2016, his son, Ralph II, now carries the torch of this influential music family. Bluegrass legends Larry Sparks and Ricky Skaggs were deeply imprinted by the Stanley sound when they performed as Clinch Mountain Boys early in their careers and will join Ralph II to perform the songs that have profoundly shaped traditional bluegrass music.

A TRIBUTE TO THE STANLEY BROTHERS: RICKY SKAGGS, LARRY SPARKS, RALPH STANLEY II

In this special Mountains of Music Homecoming concert, three leading bluegrass musicians—Ricky Skaggs, Larry Sparks, and Ralph Stanley II—celebrate the legacy of The Stanley Brothers (Carter and Ralph Stanley), natives of Clintwood, Virginia, and widely deemed among the most important bluegrass groups since the genre's emergence in the mid-1940s. Sparks was a member of The Stanley Brothers, while Sparks, Skaggs, and Ralph II were all part of Ralph Stanley's band, the Clinch Mountain Boys. At this tribute concert the three musicians will honor the legacy of Carter Stanley (August 27, 1925-December 1, 1966) and Ralph Stanley (nicknamed "Dr. Ralph;" February 25, 1927-June 23, 2016) by performing songs associated with both Stanleys. While beginning with one or both Stanleys, each of these musicians has had a noteworthy career on his own. A child prodigy on the mandolin, Skaggs (born July 18, 1954, and reared in Cordell, Kentucky) joined the Clinch Mountain Boys in 1971 alongside his friend, the future country music star Keith Whitley. After backing up Dr. Ralph on numerous classic recordings of traditional bluegrass, Skaggs left the Clinch Mountain Boys by 1975, joining J.D. Crowe's band, The New South, and beginning his foray into progressive bluegrass. Within a few years, Skaggs began recording mainstream country music, and by the early 1980s he was a major country star. By the mid-1990s he had gravitated back to his first love—bluegrass music—and thereafter he fronted his own band, Kentucky Thunder, and released a series of acclaimed albums. The recipient of numerous Grammy and International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Awards, Skaggs in recent years has dedicated himself to the repertoire and styles associated with traditional bluegrass, and on stage and in interviews he has consistently praised the founders of bluegrass, especially Bill Monroe and, of course, Dr. Ralph. Larry Sparks, born September 25, 1947, was reared in Lebanon, Ohio, by a family with roots in eastern Kentucky. Sparks as a teenager played country, rock, and bluegrass. In 1964 when many of his peers were swept up in Beatlemania, Sparks joined one of the pioneering bluegrass groups, The Stanley Brothers, fronted by Ralph Stanley on banjo and vocals and Carter Stanley on guitar and vocals. When Carter died in 1966, Dr. Ralph continued fronting the band, now called Ralph Stanley and His Clinch Mountain Boys. As a vocalist and guitarist for the Clinch Mountain Boys, Sparks recorded several classic bluegrass songs, including *Sharecropper's Son* and *I Only Exist*. In 1969 Sparks left Dr. Ralph's band to form his own group, the Lonesome Ramblers. Sparks—nicknamed "the King of Country Soul"—has guided his band in the recording of a string of respected albums of traditional bluegrass for the Rebel label. Named Male Vocalist of the Year by the IBMA in 2004 and 2005, Sparks in 2015 was inducted in the IBMA Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame. Unlike his famous banjo-playing father, Ralph Stanley II (born August 20, 1978, and a lifelong resident of Southwest Virginia) embraced the guitar, inspired by the legacy of his guitar-playing uncle, Carter Stanley. Joining his father's band in 1995 as lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist, Ralph II subsequently won many fans through his sincere commitment to traditional bluegrass. Ralph II has received several Grammy Award nominations, ultimately winning one in 2002 for a recording made with Dr. Ralph and singer-songwriter Jim Lauderdale. A talented songwriter as well as a quietly charismatic performer, Ralph II has recorded six solo albums. In 2016 his father bestowed upon him the honor of continuing to use the family band name, and now the son tours as Ralph Stanley II and the Clinch Mountain Boys. Dr. Ralph's legacy is alive and well in the care of this talented son.

Mountain Music Legends: The Stanley Brothers Legacy, continued

RALPH STANLEY II AND THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS

For decades, Ralph Stanley performed live and recorded with the Clinch Mountain Boys, a band originally formed during the period when Ralph played banjo in the pioneering duo with his guitarplaying elder brother, Carter Stanley. Over the years the band was a virtual bluegrass who's who, featuring at various times Larry Sparks, Ricky Skaggs, Keith Whitley, Melvin Goins, George Shuffler, and Curly Ray Cline, among others. Shortly before his death in 2016 Ralph Stanley bequeathed the rights for overseeing the Clinch Mountain Boys to his talented son Ralph Stanley II, who had also been a Clinch Mountain Boy. The new version of the band, now proudly led by Ralph II, features John Rigsby on fiddle and mandolin, Alex Leach on banjo, Noah Brown on upright bass, and Ralph II on the guitar in Uncle Carter's spot.

RICKY SKAGGS

Fourteen-time Grammy Award-winner Ricky Skaggs' career is easily among the most significant in recent country music history. If Skaggs' burgeoning trophy case full of awards wasn't already enough evidence of that fact, consider that legendary guitarist Chet Atkins once credited Skaggs with "single-handedly saving country music." His life's path has taken him to various musical genres, from where bluegrass music began to striking out on new musical journeys while still leaving his musical roots intact. Born July 18, 1954, in Cordell, Kentucky, Skaggs showed signs of future stardom at an early age, playing mandolin on stage with bluegrass pioneer Bill Monroe at age six and appearing on TV with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs at age seven. He emerged as a professional bluegrass musician in 1971, when he and his friend, Keith Whitley, were invited to join the legendary Ralph Stanley's band, the Clinch Mountain Boys. Skaggs then went on to record and perform with progressive bluegrass acts like the Country Gentlemen and J.D. Crowe and the New South, whose self-titled 1975 Rounder Records debut album was instantly recognized as a landmark bluegrass achievement. He then led Boone Creek, which also featured dobro ace and fellow New South alumnus Jerry Douglas. But Skaggs turned to the more mainstream country music genre in the late '70s when he joined Emmylou Harris's Hot Band, replacing Rodney Crowell. He became a recording artist in his own right in 1981 when his Epic label debut album, *Waitin' for the Sun to Shine*, topped the country charts and yielded a pair of number one hits. Overall, his productive stay at Epic Records would result in a total of 12 number one hits. Additionally he garnered eight Country Music Association Awards—including the coveted Entertainer of the Year trophy in 1985. Skaggs, of course, fit right in with young "new-traditionalist" '80s artists like Randy Travis and helped rejuvenate the country music genre after the worn-out "urban cowboy" period. But Skaggs put his own stamp on the country format by infusing his bluegrass and traditional country music roots into the contemporary Nashville sound. Skaggs' 1997 album, *Bluegrass Rules!*, released on his newly-formed Skaggs Family Records label, marked a triumphant return to bluegrass—which he's solidified ever since with a series of Grammy Award-winning albums, recorded with his amazing bluegrass band, Kentucky Thunder (eight-time winners of the IBMA's Instrumental Group of the Year). Skaggs' label has also served as a home for similar bluegrass and roots music-oriented artists, including Cherryholmes and The Whites. Skaggs struck his first chords on a mandolin over 50 years ago, and he continues to do his part to lead the recent roots revival in music. Clearly his passion for it puts him in the position to bring his lively, distinctively American form of music out of isolation and into the ears and hearts of audiences across the country and around the world. Skaggs is always forging ahead with cross-cultural, genre-bending musical ideas and inspirations.

LARRY SPARKS

Larry Sparks is a dedicated leader for bluegrass music and is among the most widely known and respected touring musicians in bluegrass and gospel music today. Sparks began his career in the mid-1960s as guitarist with the Stanley Brothers and later became lead vocalist for Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys. Sparks went on to form his own band, the Lonesome Ramblers, in 1969. He has recorded and toured with his band for over four decades, releasing over 60 albums and delighting countless fans with his soulful vocals and unparalleled musicianship. Sparks has released such hits as *A Face in the Crowd*, *Blue Virginia Blues*, *I've Just Seen the Rock of Ages*, *Tennessee 1949*, *John Deere Tractor*, *I Just Want to Thank You Lord*, *Love of the Mountains*, *The Last Suit*, and *These Ole Blues* and has also recorded a tribute album to Hank Williams—and the list goes on. He has performed in such world famous venues as the Grand Ole Opry and at Austin City

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Limits. He's also made other PBS appearances and toured the United States, Canada, and Japan. Sparks has been recognized as the International Bluegrass Music Association's Male Vocalist of the Year and was also awarded Album of the Year and Recorded Event of the Year for his album, *Larry Sparks 40*, featuring artists such as Alison Krauss, Vince Gill, Ralph Stanley, Ricky Skaggs, Tom T. Hall, and many more. Sparks received the honor of being inducted into the Bill Monroe Bluegrass Hall of Fame, the George D. Hays Hall of Fame, and the International Bluegrass Association's Hall of Fame. Sparks was nominated for a Gospel Music Association Dove Award for his gospel album, *New Highway*. He is celebrating 52 years in bluegrass music this year; his 50th *Celebration* CD was released on August 5, 2014, featuring bluegrass legends such as Ralph Stanley, Curly Seckler, Bobby Osborne, Jesse McReynolds, Alison Krauss, and Judy Marshall. The single from the new CD, *Bitterweeds*, reached number one on the Bluegrass Today Airplay Direct chart. While Sparks is most definitely a stylist, his approach to music is more than a style; it is real with no gimmicks, even after 50 years in the spotlight. He is still on a roll and creating some of his best music. Sparks' style is mature, seasoned, and deeply expressive. Throughout his long career, he has stuck with what works. He has followed his vision and has made an enormous contribution to the music. Sparks has kept his music real. For more information, please visit larrysparks.com.

The Mountains of Music Homecoming runs June 9-17, 2017.
For more information, please visit mtnsoufmusic.com.



In the Galleries

FROM THESE WOODS

June 8-September 2, 2017*

All galleries

From the Blue Ridge forests of the New River Valley to the temperate rainforests of North Georgia and Southwest Virginia, the region's diverse woodlands represent a significant ecological and artistic hotbed, inspiring a diverse array of art forms. Home to the largest stretch of public land in Eastern North America and an above average density of biodiversity, our Appalachian forests present unique opportunities and critical responsibilities.

Featuring highly skilled, handmade works from local and regional artists, *From These Woods* explores the dynamic relationship between humans, the natural world, and the creative impulse. The exhibition focuses on wood, showcasing a number of artistic styles and practices, including woodturning, carving, basketry, and furniture making.

Exploring the importance of place, space, and sustainability, many of the artists feature work that has been sustainably sourced from local materials, emphasizing the importance of maintaining environmental integrity and supporting the local economy while simultaneously transforming our valuable natural resources into works of art.

From These Woods is curated by Moss Arts Center graduate assistants and M.A. candidates Devon Johnson and Jeff Attridge under the direction of Margo Crutchfield, curator at large.

**Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor open June 8-August 19, 2017*

GALLERY HOURS

Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

Class and group visits always welcome, tours available