

# New People's University Will Explore Appalachian Music & Folklore



The latest series in the People's University program at the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling will explore the history and sounds of Appalachian Music and Folklore.

Classes will meet on consecutive Tuesday evenings at 7 PM, from August 2 through September 20 in the library's auditorium.

The People's University is a free program for adults who wish to continue their education in the liberal arts, featuring courses taught by experts in each subject that enable patrons to pursue their goal of lifelong learning in subjects such as history, philosophy, and literature. There are no grades and patrons are welcome to attend all or only some programs.

Classes begin on Tuesday, August 2 at 7 PM with Appalachian Music: A Multicultural Overview.

In this presentation, Dr. Travis Stimeling (West Virginia University) will present an overview of Appalachia's rich musical traditions, focusing especially on the ways that successive waves of immigration have shaped the sounds of the region's music. Tracing the musical contributions of Appalachia's Native American, Scots-Irish, German, African American, and southern European populations, this presentation suggests that Appalachian music is the product of centuries of intercultural and cross-cultural interactions. Vocalist **Liz Richter**, who sings with the Marsh Wheeling String Band, will perform a few of the quintessential Appalachian ballads, including "Pretty Saro," "Omie Wise," and "Long Black Veil."



Instructor **Travis Stimeling** (PhD, musicology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is assistant professor of music history and director of the WVU Bluegrass Band. A scholar of commercial country and Appalachian traditional music, he recently edited *The Country Music Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2015), an anthology of primary source readings in country music history spanning the late nineteenth century to the present, and is the author of *Cosmic Cowboys and New Hicks: The Countercultural Sounds of Austin's Progressive Country Music Scene* (Oxford University Press, 2011), which earned an American Musicological Society Publication Subvention. He has published articles in such journals as *American Music*, *Popular Music*, *Popular Music and Society*, and *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, among others. He also served as a Senior Editor for *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed. Prior to joining the faculty of WVU, he served on the faculty of Millikin University.

The remainder of the schedule for People's University, Appalachian Music & Folklore:

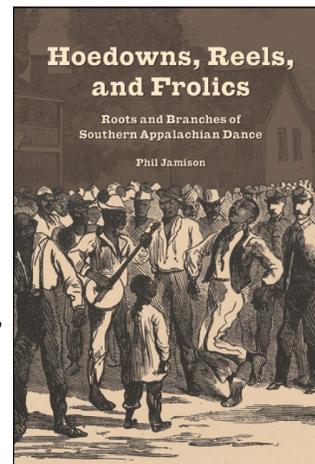
## Class 2, August 9: Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance

The music and dance traditions of Appalachia are often portrayed as survivals of an ancient Anglo-Celtic heritage that was brought to the region by the early pioneers. Since the time of the earliest settlers, however, the southern backcountry has been home to a diverse population, and the region, though relatively isolated, has always maintained contact with the outside world through trade, travel, and immigration. The Ohio River, in particular, played an important role, serving as a cultural conduit and facilitating the dissemination of music and dance throughout the region. The traditional square dances and step dances of Appalachia reflect this history as well as the cultural and

ethnic diversity of the region. Rather than being pure survivals of an ancient Anglo-Celtic heritage, locked away in isolation, these American folk traditions are a blend of the European, African, and Native American dance traditions, and they also show the influence of popular nineteenth-century social dances. This presentation, which will include a demonstration of Appalachian flatfoot dancing, will explore the roots of these Southern dances and challenge some of the common misconceptions and myths that have long been associated with these Appalachian traditions.



Instructor **Phil Jamison** is nationally known as a dance caller, old-time musician, and flatfoot dancer. He has called dances, performed, and taught at music festivals and dance events throughout the U.S. and overseas since the early 1970s, including more than thirty-five years as a member of the Green Grass Cloggers. His flatfoot dancing was featured in the film, *Songcatcher*, for which he also served as Traditional Dance consultant. Over the last thirty years, Jamison has done extensive research in the area of Appalachian dance, and his recently-published book *Hoedowns, Reels, and Frolics: Roots and Branches of Southern Appalachian Dance* (University of Illinois Press, 2015) tells the story behind the square dances, step dances, reels, and other forms of dance practiced in southern Appalachia. Phil teaches



mathematics as well as Appalachian music and dance at Warren Wilson College, in Asheville, North Carolina, where he also coordinates the Old-Time Music and Dance Week at the Swannanoa Gathering. Visit his web site at [www.philjamison.com](http://www.philjamison.com).

### **Class 3, August 16: West Virginia Fiddle**

The fiddle holds a special place in the musical heritage of West Virginia. Multi-instrumentalist Doug Van Gundy will discuss the history of the fiddle and how it found its way to Appalachia, provide background on some of the most influential traditional players of the recorded-music era, and perform examples from the deep catalog of West Virginia fiddle tunes (with brief forays into clawhammer banjo and unaccompanied ballad singing).



Instructor **Doug Van Gundy** grew up in Elkins, West Virginia. He studied fiddle with the late Mose Coffman of Greenbrier County through the National Endowment for the Humanities folk arts apprenticeship program of the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis and Elkins College. Doug has been performing and teaching old-time fiddle and banjo for more than twenty years. He has played solo shows at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and at Buddy Guy's Legends Club in Chicago, as well as other venues across the country. His music is deeply rooted in the oldest traditional music of his home state of West Virginia, and has taught workshops throughout the Mid-Atlantic and New England. His playing has been featured on three CDs and many documentary films and television commercials. Doug is also a member of the two-man string band, Born Old, with Paul Gartner. They were recently featured on National Public Radio's

*Mountain Stage* program, and have played at both the Appalachian String Band Festival (Clifftop) and Vandalia Gathering annually for over a decade. Their repertoire consists of traditional old-time music from the central Appalachians as well as early country classics from the great artists of the 78 rpm era, including The Carter Family, Charlie Poole, Uncle Dave Macon, and others. Additionally, Doug is a nationally-known poet, and author of the collection, *A Life Above Water*, published by Red Hen Press. He teaches in the low-residency MFA program at West Virginia Wesleyan College, where he is also director of the undergraduate Honors Program.

## Class 4, August 23: A History and Overview of Appalachian Folklore & Folklife

This course will provide an overview of the discipline of folklore, which includes study of vernacular forms of art, music, dance, stories, foodways, material culture, and architecture, from diverse cultural communities and traditions. We will consider how folklore and cultural heritage plays a role in all of our lives, and examine both old, established traditions such as quilt making, traditional Greek dance, and the Blues; as well as newer and emergent traditions including internet memes, graffiti, and zine culture. Artist, writer, and storyteller Cheryl Ryan Harshman will provide some traditional, humorous Appalachian stories, some of which were recorded and published in the Grandfather Tales by Richard Chase.



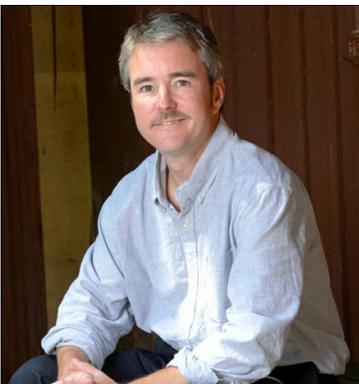
Instructor **Emily Hilliard** is the West Virginia state folklorist at the West Virginia Humanities Council. She holds an M.A. in folklore from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and a B.A. in English and French from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Hilliard has worked at cultural heritage institutions including Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, the National Council for the Traditional Arts, Sandy Spring Museum/Maryland Traditions, and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. From 2008-2014, she taught literature, creative writing, and cultural courses at the University of Michigan's New England Literature Program, an intensive place-based living and learning community in the woods of Maine. Hilliard is a 2016 recipient of the American Folklife Center's Henry Reed Fund Award for a public programming and documentation project highlighting the career of ballad singer Phyllis Marks, and was a 2014 Berea College Appalachian Sound Archives Fellow for research and publication on East Kentucky banjo player Nora E. Carpenter. Her writing about foodways, music, traditional culture, and other work has been published by NPR, Ecotone, UNC Press' quarterly Southern Cultures, and the Southern Foodways Alliance's James Beard Award-winning Gravy, among others. She also writes the pie blog Nothing in the House and is an old-time musician. Find her work at [emilyhilliard.com](http://emilyhilliard.com).

**Cheryl Ryan Harshman** (Bethany, Pitt) is an artist, writer, and storyteller, whose work often celebrates traditional Appalachian folk culture. She is currently Library Director at West Liberty University.



## Class 5, August 30: Food Heritage and Dulcimer Music

### Part 1: West Virginia's Food Heritage



Stan Bumgardner will talk about the history of food in West Virginia. He will examine how certain foods and beverages hold a special place in Appalachian culture and how this heritage has evolved over time—from early German and Scots-Irish pioneers, to later immigrants of the early 19th and early 20th centuries, to the present-day “local foods” movement.” He will demonstrate how our food and beverage traditions take on unique forms in different parts of the state and, at the same time, bind us together as West Virginians.

Instructor **Stan Bumgardner** has been a professional historian for more than 25 years. He has worked at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, for the West Virginia History Film Project, at West Virginia Archives and History, and as acting director of the West Virginia State Museum. He served as creative director for the West Virginia State Museum renovation. He has also developed exhibits for the South Charleston Museum Foundation and the National Coal Heritage Area and created a traveling exhibit for the documentary The Great Textbook War. As a

free-lance writer, Bumgardner is the author of *The Children's Home Society of West Virginia: Children-Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (1996) and *Charleston* (2006). He has written articles for *American History* and *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine and developed a driving guide for historic sites in southern West Virginia. He also directed a project that documented the food heritage of each county in West Virginia. In 2015, he succeeded John Lilly as the editor of *Goldenseal* magazine and state folklife director.

## Part 2: Hammered Dulcimer

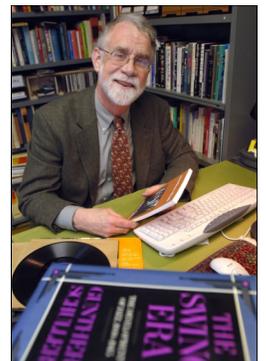
Americana musician **Laura Cramblet**, director of the Bellaire Public Library, will perform on hammered dulcimer and guitar. In addition to being a singer/songwriter and quilter, Laura is a member of the West Virginia Storytelling Guild. She has been published in *Goldenseal* and *Wild, Wonderful West Virginia* magazines.



## Class 6, September 6: African-American Musical Life in the Mountain State.

Though the black population of West Virginia today is very small, from the late 1860s to the mid-1940s the state had experienced an ever-increasing presence of African Americans, particularly in the southern coal field counties. After the Civil War, blacks moved into the Mountain State to build and maintain the railroads that opened up the coal fields and to mine the coal located in that region. They brought their music with them: work songs, spirituals, gospel songs, fiddle tunes, and later the blues. Their presence would draw traveling black tent shows and dance bands to the state, introducing music from New York City and other northern urban areas. Their influence transformed the country music of their white neighbors, most especially in the genesis of bluegrass.

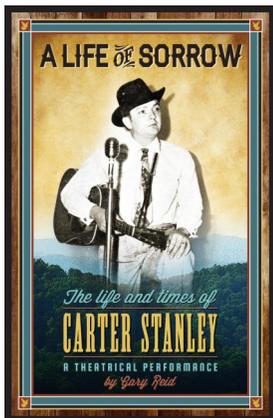
Instructor **Christopher Wilkinson**, Professor Emeritus of Music History at West Virginia University, was on the faculty of the School of Music from 1976 to 2013. Beginning in 1988, his research focused on African-American music with particular attention to jazz history before World War II. Research culminating in his book *Big Band Jazz in Black West Virginia, 1930-1942* (2013) as well as information assembled for various courses has provided the source materials for this presentation.



## Class 7, September 13: Bluegrass: The Music of the Stanley Brothers



Instructor **Gary B. Reid** has been a historian for over 40 years, and is regarded as the foremost authority on the music of the Stanley Brothers. His book *The Music of the Stanley Brothers* earned Reid the International Bluegrass Music Association's 2015 award for Print/Media Person of the Year. Reid is a three-time recipient of the IBMA's award for Best Liner Notes. He recently won second place at the Sounds of the Mountains storytelling competition in Fincastle, VA. Also a veteran actor, Reid created a one-man show about Carter Stanley in 2009, "A Life of Sorrow," the Life and Times of Carter Stanley. With his brother, Ralph, Carter Stanley, fronted a bluegrass-styled band from 1946 until his untimely death at the age of 41 in 1966. As the Stanley Brothers, they were the second professional band to perform the style of music that came to be known as bluegrass. Bill Monroe, the acknowledged Father of Blue-



grass, once called Carter Stanley the “best natural lead singer” he’d ever heard. The songs he wrote and the recordings he made helped form the foundation of a music that is now a world-wide phenomenon. A Life of Sorrow affords today’s audiences a chance to connect with this bluegrass legend as he recounts highlights from his life and career, including childhood days on the family farm, old-time musicians who influenced him, his songwriting, struggles with alcohol, stories from life on the road, and his admiration for Monroe.

### Class 8, September 20: West Virginia’s Original Ghost Story

In the late 18th century in Middleway, West Virginia, alleged spirits were persecuting a family – strange rumblings; flying items; and invisible shears cutting sheets and dresses into crescent-shaped strips. A Russian prince turned Catholic priest would end the demonic manifestation, which was replaced by a new spiritual manifestation – one that instructed the family in the Catholic faith. The voice predicted that the land would become “a great place of prayer and fasting and praise.” This prediction was fulfilled in 1978 with the establishment of Priest Field Pastoral Center. This talk will trace the history and popular memory of what many consider to be West Virginia’s original ghost story, and how the Wizard Clip story is still being written – this time, in Rome.



Instructor **Jon-Erik Gilot** is the Director of Archives & Records at the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. He is a graduate of Bethany College (BA – History) and Kent State University (MLIS – Archives). He has been fascinated with the incredible story of Priest Field since his first trip there nearly twenty years ago.

To register for The People’s University Appalachian Music & Folklore, please call the library at 304-232-0244, send an email to [lunchwithbooks@yahoo.com](mailto:lunchwithbooks@yahoo.com), or visit the Reference Desk. Remember, classes are free and open to the public. There are no grades, and registration is not a commitment. You are welcome to attend all or only some classes. Complimentary refreshments will be provided. For more information, visit [www.ohiocountylibrary.org](http://www.ohiocountylibrary.org).

