



Flat Rock Campus

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Transylvania Center

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For Release

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Blacks, Whites, and American Popular Music at BRCC

The Arts and Humanities Series at Blue Ridge Community College will present 'Sincere Forms of Flattery: Blacks, Whites, and American Popular Music' to honor Black History Month. This free program sponsored by the North Carolina Humanities Council will take place on Thursday, February 4, 2010, at 7:30 p.m. in the Patton Auditorium.

Presenter Billy Stevens will demonstrate how historic interactions between African Americans and European Americans shaped the evolution of American popular music. With its roots in slavery and the fusion of musical traditions brought from both Africa and Europe, American music is a natural outgrowth of the unique culture of the American South. From rap stars to rock 'n' rollers, gospel shouters to big band crooners, from Stephen Foster to Elvis Presley, a pattern of contact and conflict between white and black cultures fueled the creation of confluent musical forms recognized worldwide as distinctly American.

Using musical instruments as well as rare recordings, Stevens will explore the relationship between jazz and blues, ragtime and gospel, and how the first distinctly American musical genre, blackface minstrelsy, has influenced country musicians up to the present day. The result is a better understanding of how our music reflects America's social fabric, affirming the contributions of performers both famous and forgotten, while empowering minority communities often relegated to obscurity.

Billy Stevens from Durham has extensive international touring experience sponsored by the US Information Agency of the Department of State. He has presented his lecture/demonstration 'The History of the Blues: the Roots of Rock 'n' Roll' in more than 40 countries including India, Kenya, Israel

and Palestine as well as in North and South Carolina. Stevens has many years experience as a solo artist with a variety of bands. His master's degree is from the University of Mississippi

The Arts and Humanities Series is sponsored by the Community and Continuing Education Department. For more information contact Martha Howell at (828) 694-1743 or at marthah@blueridge.edu.

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