



March 2007 – Mississippi Humanities Council Newsletter
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Mississippi Hosts National Kick-Off for Smithsonian Exhibit

(MERIDIAN, MS) – A daylong showcase of Mississippi “roots” music will mark the national launch of a new traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit Saturday, March 24, in Meridian, MS, sponsored by the Mississippi Humanities Council. “New Harmonies” is an interactive exhibit portraying the ongoing cultural processes that have made America the birthplace of more music than any place on earth. It will appear in six communities in Mississippi from March 2007 through January 2008, including Meridian, New Albany, Vicksburg, Gulfport, Columbia and Clarksdale.

To celebrate its national unveiling, the Mississippi Humanities Council and the Jimmie Rodgers Foundation, Inc., the Meridian host of the exhibit, will host a national kick-off celebration in and around the MSU Riley Center. Activities will include Roots Music in the Plaza (Dumont Plaza) throughout the day, capped by a kick-off program in the Riley Center at 7 p.m. The kick-off program is free, but tickets must be acquired from the Riley Center box office, 601-696-2200.

Anna Cohn of the Smithsonian Institution is among the special guests. Musical performances will be provided by The Vernon Brothers (bluegrass), Cadillac John and Bill Abel (blues), Britt Gulley as Jimmie Rodgers (country), Fiddling Bill Rogers and the Rust College A’Cappella Choir (gospel). Kick-off festivities will include a ribbon-cutting for the exhibit. The exhibition provides a fascinating, inspiring and toe-tapping listen to the American story of multi-cultural exchange. The story is full of surprises about familiar songs, histories of instruments, the roles of religion and technology, and the continuity of musical roots from Native American chanting and drumming to the latest hip hop CD.

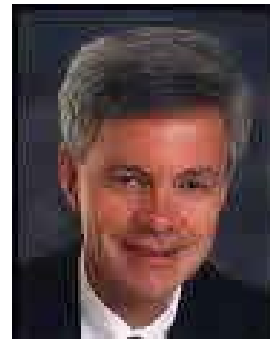
“New Harmonies” is part of the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street (MOMS) program. MOMS serves small- to medium-sized communities by bringing Smithsonian-quality exhibitions to local museums, historical societies, libraries and community centers that traditionally have limited access to traveling exhibitions due to space and cost limitations. Each exhibition consists of free-standing structures that contain interactive components and artifacts. In addition to the MOMS structures, each host community will add their own elements to their installation of the exhibit and produce a series of local programs related to the “New Harmonies” theme.

Tour sites in Mississippi include: MSU Riley Center, Meridian; Union County Heritage Museum, New Albany; Southern Cultural Heritage Center, Vicksburg; Gulf Coast Community College-Jefferson Davis Campus, Gulfport; Marion County Historical Society Museum, Columbia; Delta Blues Museum, Clarksdale. For information about “New Harmonies,” contact David Morgan at 601-432-6752 or by email at david@mhc.state.ms.us. Information about the traveling exhibit may

also be obtained by visiting www.mshumanities.org or www.museumonmainstreet.org.

New Chair, Council Member Elected

Phi Theta Kappa Executive Director Rod A. Risley has been elected chair of the Mississippi Humanities Council, succeeding Dr. Willis H. Lott, president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, who served as chair two consecutive terms from 2003 through 2006. Risley was named Phi Theta Kappa's second Executive Director in 1985. He is a graduate of San Jacinto College and received a baccalaureate degree from Sam Houston State University. He received a master of business administration degree from Millsaps College, and is currently completing his doctoral dissertation in the Community College Leadership Program at Mississippi State University.



Dr. Thomas Easterling, English instructor at Mississippi School for Mathematics and Sciences, was elected to join the Council. Easterling holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. in English from the University of Mississippi. His undergraduate study was completed at Louisiana Scholars' College at Northwestern State University of Louisiana in humanities and social thought.



MHC Assists Formation of Coast 'Culture Club'

Several Mississippi Gulf Coast cultural agencies and individuals are collaborating to pursue post-hurricane recovery. The group met for an organizational meeting March 20 at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center in Gulfport. The meeting was a key outcome of a "Cultural Charrette" co-sponsored by the Mississippi Humanities Council in Gulfport last December. Among other business, the group discussed a mission station for pursuing recovery and for enhancing the role of culture in Gulf Coast life. The group believes it can fill a vital role as a clearinghouse for cultural and funding information. Groups or individuals interested in participating in this new network may contact Maria Watson at marialwatson@bellsouth.net.

NEH Offers Funding Workshop for Humanities Preservation Projects

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), in partnership with the Mississippi Humanities Council, will present a free workshop in Biloxi on Friday, March 30, 2007. This workshop is designed to assist small and mid-size non-profit organizations by identifying grant opportunities available through NEH and providing individual sessions on how to write a successful grant application. Information will be presented regarding NEH's Preservation Assistance Grants. These \$5,000 grants help small and mid-sized institutions such as libraries, museums, historical societies, archival repositories, town and county records offices and colleges improve the preservation and care of their humanities collections. Grants may be used for general preservation assessments, consultations with professionals to address a specific preservation issue or problem, purchase of storage furniture and preservation supplies and education and training. Application deadline is May 15, 2007. For full guidelines, visit www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html.

The workshop will take place at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jefferson Davis Campus, Building G121, Gulfport, MS, at 2 p.m. Pre-registration is encouraged to ensure adequate materials for all participants. To register, contact Melanie Collins: 601-576-6810 (voice); 601-576-6899; or mcollins@mdah.state.ms.us. Attendance is highly encouraged, but is not mandatory for application for these grants.

MHC Hosts Summer Teachers' Workshop Exploring Roots Music

The Mississippi Humanities Council invites Mississippi educators to consider participating in an exciting summer workshop this coming June, titled "From the Birthplace of America's Music: The Music and Musicians of Mississippi." The workshop will explore the wonderful diversity of musical creativity that has flowed out of our state, including the genres of county, blues, jazz, gospel, classical, opera and hip-hop, along with other forms ranging from shape note singing to pop music. The goal of the workshop is to promote the understanding of Mississippi's contributions to the world's music, and then use that understanding to creatively teach Mississippi history to our students. Please visit www.mshumanities.org to view a workshop schedule and a workshop application form.

New Scholars Join MHC Speakers Bureau

Several new speakers and speakers' topics have been added to the Mississippi Humanities Council Speakers Bureau. Bill Wilson, a Jackson artist with a degree in art from Belhaven College, is among the Council's newest speakers. His topics include *Beware of Portrait Painting: It Can Make You Color Blind*, an examination of the role art plays in perceptions relating to race, beauty and acceptance, and *Me Talk Purty: A Redneck's Journey from String Art to Fine Portrait*, a true tale of how "hard work and hope can take a person on the run from federal marshals with limited educational resources from backwoods Mississippi into the life of an academic and an artist."



Bill Wilson, a new Speakers Bureau lecturer, uses art to examine concepts of race, beauty and acceptance.

Visit www.mshumanities.org to see a complete list of topics currently available and an application form to bring a speaker to your nonprofit group. Speakers receive an honorarium from the Mississippi Humanities Council and reimbursement for travel and lodging expenses, if necessary.

Mississippi Humanities Council Gives \$19,570 for Humanities Programming

The Mississippi Humanities Council approved 10 Mini Grant projects in January for a total of \$19,570. Mini-grant applications are reviewed bi-monthly. The approved projects span a variety of humanities disciplines. The successful proposals include:

Proposal for Support of a Keynote Speaker for the Second Annual Conference on Human Rights. Sponsor: University of Southern Mississippi. Award: \$2,000. Annual human rights conference; 2007 focus on genocide.

USM Gulf Coast Katrina Oral History Public Program and Transcription Project. Sponsor: University of Southern Mississippi. Award: \$2,000. Consultant will convert 40 hours of Katrina-related oral history interviews into searchable forms for use in public program celebrating the re-opening of a storm-damaged university auditorium.

Historic Preservation Curriculum. Sponsor: Mississippi Heritage Trust. Award: \$2,000. Curriculum for primary schoolchildren on historic preservation in Mississippi.

Sharing the Legacy of the Founders of the Prentiss Institute. Sponsor: Prentiss Institute Centennial Committee. Award: \$1,570. Symposium examining legacy of Prentiss Institute founders.

New Harmonies Companion Exhibit Expenses. Sponsor: Jimmie Rodgers Foundation, Inc. Award: \$2,000. Exhibit to complement Smithsonian Institution's "New Harmonies" exhibit during its stay in Meridian, MS.

Degas' Dancers. Sponsor: Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra. Award: \$2,000. Community project exploring art, music, classical ballet, theatre, symphonic music, opera, history and theory using the art of painter Edgar Degas.

Down From the Hills Heritage Music and Folk Life Festival. Sponsor: Union County Historical Society and Heritage Museum. Award: \$2,000. Annual festival with elements that coordinate with Smithsonian Institution's "New Harmonies" exhibit during its stay in New Albany, MS.

Unita Blackwell: A Delta Woman's Life Journey. Sponsor: Friends of the Starkville Library/Starkville Reads. Award: \$2,000. Five presentations in northeast Mississippi on Unita Blackwell's autobiography.

The Gullah Cultural Heritage: A Research Conference. Sponsor: Tougaloo College. Award: \$2,000. Symposium on the Gullah Cultural Heritage and its place in Mississippi African American heritage.

Expenses for New Harmonies Companion Exhibit. Sponsor: Jimmie Rodgers Foundation, Inc. Award: \$2,000. One-day music festival for national kick-off for Smithsonian Institution's "New Harmonies" exhibit in Mississippi.

Upcoming Humanities Events in Mississippi

- March 22–23, 2007, ***14th Oxford Conference for the Book***, University of Mississippi, University, MS. Speakers will include notable authors, editors, publishers and others in the book trade, as well as educators and literacy and advocates. The 2007 conference is dedicated to author Larry Brown (1951–2004) whose writings about rural life in his native Mississippi are now considered classics of Southern literature.
- April 12, 2007, ***Southern Circuit Film Series: Interkosmos***, Millsaps College, Jackson, MS. Jim Finn's mockumentary follows an East German secret space mission to colonize the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. This cosmonaut romance told through photographs, test and training footage, and a series of infectious specially recorded German pop songs weaves together the styles of a '70s documentary, Hollywood musical and dry-humor comedy. Film begins at 7:30 p.m.
- April 18, 2007, ***Bringing It All Together: The Challenges of Creative Writing***, Itawamba Community College, Fulton, MS. Workshop addressing the challenges of writing creatively.

- April 20, 2007, *Greyhound Speaker Series*, Greyhound Bus Station, Clarksdale, MS. One in a series of six speakers, Sylvester Oliver will present "The African–American Music Traditions of Northeast Mississippi."
- May 10–July 8, 2007, *The Needle's Song: The Folk Art of Ethel Wright Mohamed*, Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Laurel, MS. Through colorful stitched pictures, museum exhibit presents a glimpse of the cultural influences that defined life in rural Mississippi in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Complementary events will include classroom activities for local schoolchildren, tours and on–site stitchery demonstrations.
- May 18, 2007, *Greyhound Speaker Series*, Greyhound Bus Station, Clarksdale, MS. One in a series of six speakers, Ovid S. Vickers will present "A Vision for Mississippi: Folklore as a Means of Bringing Together Mississippi's Diverse Cultures."

Next MHC Grant Deadlines are April 15 and May 1, 2007

April 15, 2007, is the next Mississippi Humanities Council grant application deadline for proposals over \$2,000. The next mini grant deadline, for proposals up to \$2,000, is May 1, 2007. Application guidelines and forms are available at www.mshumanities.org.

Mississippi Humanities Council Announces New Grant Deadlines

The Mississippi Humanities Council has revised its deadlines for grant applications exceeding \$2,000. Applications for Regular Grants will now be accepted September 15 and April 15 annually. Decisions will be announced November 15 and June 15. Visit www.mshumanities.org and click on "Downloads" to review and/or download grant guidelines and application forms. The deadlines for Mini–grants, less than \$2,000, remain unchanged.

Disclaimer

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