CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The theme of this year’s conference — MANY MOUNTAINS, MANY MUSICS — challenges you to view Appalachia from a fresh perspective and discover its emergence as a creative, dynamic force. A key component of this year’s conference is the CONCURRENT SESSIONS, which include a particularly strong offering of panels, papers, performances, roundtables, and workshops on music of the Appalachian region. Included are such sessions as “Documenting and Interpreting Appalachian Music,” moderated by Ted Olson. This panel brings together Ron Pen (Director of The John Jacob Niles Center for American Music), Nathan Salsburg (Curator of The Alan Lomax Archive), Stephen Wade (independent scholar), and Joe Wilson (retired Executive Director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts) to discuss the history and impact of music from Appalachia. Another session, “Appalachian Music: Discussing the Top Ten,” invites musicians, teachers, and scholars to participate in a roundtable on Appalachian music and to create a “Top Ten” playlist for a forthcoming special music edition of Appalachian Journal. For educators interested in incorporating music into Appalachian studies, there is “Strings and Bows in the Academy: Teaching Bluegrass, Old Time, Country, and Celtic Music in an Appalachian Studies Program.” Other sessions include such topics as Appalachian music and urban migration, the music of northern Appalachia, and influences on Appalachian music, from Latin rhythms to jazz, blues, and hip hop.

Sessions on Appalachian studies are likewise strong and include a roundtable discussion on “Strategic Planning to Strengthen Appalachian Studies Programs in the Twenty-first Century.” There is also a tribute to Ron Eller, recently retired from the University of Kentucky, which provides a perspective on his contribution to Appalachian studies as an historian, environmentalist, and avid supporter of sustainable and just futures for Appalachian communities.

Sessions relating to other aspects of Appalachia and its diverse communities are thought-provoking and forward looking. Such sessions as “Internal Colony – Are You Sure? Defining, Theorizing, Organizing Appalachia” bring into focus the realities of Appalachia, especially as the need for major economic transitions within Appalachia become apparent. The conference’s MANY MOUNTAINS PLENARY – moderated by Dr. Randy Wykoff, Dean of the ETSU College of Public Health – speaks to this challenge, bringing together a noteworthy panel to discuss “Opportunity & Enterprise in Appalachia.” This year’s KEYNOTE speaker is Margo Miller, executive director of the Appalachian Community Fund (ACF). Showing how Central Appalachians engage in social, economic, racial, and environmental justice, Miller will tell a story of community empowerment and transformation by lifting up the successful work of ACF grantees and talk about the ACF’s role in helping build the capacity of grassroots organizations in the region for the past 28 years. Senator Lamar Alexander is unable to deliver the keynote address due to legislative commitments.

The MANY MUSICS RECEPTION, MANY MOUNTAINS BANQUET, and ASA AWARDS are on Friday evening, to be followed by a MANY MUSICS SQUARE DANCE. There is also JAMMING IN THE CAVE on Friday and Saturday evenings for those who wish to partake. On Saturday, the Mary B. Martin School of the Arts at ETSU presents RICKY SKAGGS AND KENTUCKY THUNDER in concert. Deeply rooted in tradition but with an innovative edge, this Many Musics performance embodies the best of Appalachia. On Sunday morning, join ETSU’s Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies Program at the MANY MUSICS: BISCUITS & BLUEGRASS GOSPEL HOUR. What better way to culminate the 2015 Appalachian Studies Association Conference!

NEW THIS YEAR

As a member of the Appalachian Studies Association, you are invited to join your ASA colleagues at the 2015 MEMBERSHIP FORUM on Saturday, 11:00-12:00, in the D. P. Culp auditorium. The Forum is more than a business meeting. It is an opportunity to learn about ASA and participate in shaping its future. This year, the actions of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee will be highlighted, along with a new ASA initiative, YOUNG APPALACHIAN LEADERS AND LEARNERS – Y’ALL.

Y’ALL is an ASA committee that facilitates connections between young people in Appalachia. Y’ALL encourages engagement, leadership, and collegiality. Y’ALL representatives Brittany Means and Kathryn Engle will introduce Y’ALL at the Forum. ASA members interested in the mission of Y’ALL are invited to an organizational meeting on Saturday at 5:30 pm in the ETSU Cave (Culp Center). There is also a Y’ALL mixer after the Ricky Skaggs concert, at approximately 10:00 pm in the bar at Wellington’s in the Carnegie Hotel.