



Season 4. Concert 5.

## **Red River Dulcimer Ensemble**

**Music in the Folk Tradition  
January 7, 2020**

Sponsored by Central Louisiana Arts and Healthcare Inc.  
with Judy and Bob Ginsburgh

Nachtmusik is a donor-supported program of nonprofit CreativeSurge Louisiana



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FIFTH ANNUAL

# Sugarmill Music Festival

MAY 15-16-17, 2020

PRELUDE  
PERFORMANCE  
Student Players  
of Central Louisiana  
4pm

5:30pm

Greg Robin, guitar, and  
Molly Goforth, cello,  
from south Louisiana

**Robin &  
Goforth**

FRIDAY

7pm



INTRODUCTION TO THE  
**LABYRINTH**  
DRS. ANNELLE AND MARTIN TANNER

8pm

Traveling Artists

**MERCER-McCOLLUM** DUO  
VIOLA & PIANO

On tour from Louisville, Kentucky, in their first Louisiana performance,  
Lydia Mercer and Ethan McCollum

SATURDAY

Chef Jay's Sugarmill Café  
Mediation Labyrinth  
Plein Air Artists  
ALL WEEKEND



A SCHOLARLY PRESENTATION IN LECTURE AND MUSIC:  
**Solomon Northup**  
in the  
Central Louisiana  
Sugarhouse



11:30am

DIRECTED BY JACKSON HARMEYER, WITH PAUL CHRISTOPHER AND  
MICHELLE RIGGS • ORIGINAL MUSIC BY JOSE GABRIEL VELAZQUEZ

4pm



Lecture and Performance

John W. and Bertie M.  
DEMING  
FOUNDATION

**Kaija Saariaho**  
Flute & Cello Music

JACKSON HARMEYER, PRESENTER  
ZENDRA J. WHITE, FLUTE • PAUL CHRISTOPHER, CELLO

Drs. Annelle and Martin Tanner present

1pm

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5:30pm

**Dvořák**  
**Terzetto in C**  
STRING ENSEMBLE OF NORTHWEST LOUISIANA  
Also performing Mozart

Underwritten by Dr. Gill Taylor-Tyree

2:30pm

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**versipel**  
Music of Louisiana

Special Guest

**Brian Dunbar**  
Woodwind Quintet  
FEATURING BRIAN DUNBAR, FLUTE



8pm

Presented by the Lisa and Stephen Norman

SUNDAY

art  
auction  
2pm

1pm

**Pineywoods**  
Brass Quintet



3pm



Michael Blaney



Paul Christopher



Michael Young

GRAND FINALE

**Rosalie**  
Piano Trio

This annual Festival  
and our monthly  
Nachtmusik concerts  
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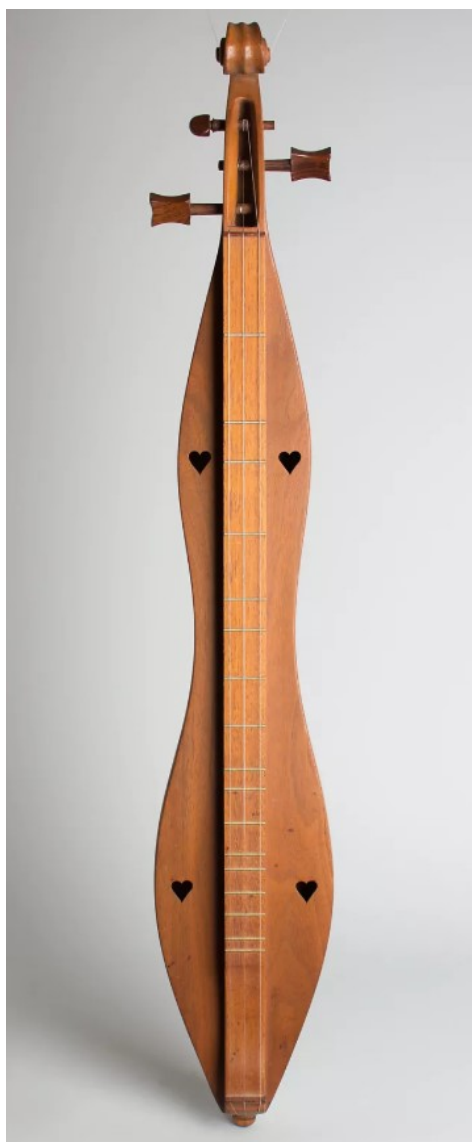
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# RED RIVER DULCIMER ENSEMBLE

# MUSIC IN THE FOLK TRADITION

Program Notes by Jackson Harmeyer

Tonight the Red River Dulcimer Ensemble shares with us music in the folk tradition. Their group, made up of more than a dozen amateur mountain dulcimer players, is based here in Central Louisiana, and their program mixes music with Louisiana ties with folk music from around the world. Although at Nachtmusik and our Sugarmill Music Festival we have programed a wide variety of music from different locales and eras, tonight's concert still marks a first: a concert completely dedicated to something aside from classical music in any of its varied forms. The mountain dulcimer, also called the Appalachian or Kentucky dulcimer, is a fretted string instrument, consisting of a narrow fingerboard and a body shaped either like an hourglass or a teardrop. Dulcimers traditionally possess three strings while some newer models add a fourth string. It is plucked and placed either on the lap or a table. The first American dulcimers are believed to have developed in southwestern Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century among mostly Scottish immigrant communities and their interactions with other European settler groups. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the instrument builders J. Edward Thomas of eastern Kentucky and C. P. Pritchard of nearby Huntington, West Virginia constructed many of the dulcimers then being played. In the mid-twentieth century, the dulcimer found a major exponent in Jean Ritchie who performed and recorded extensively; in 1963, she also published an important manual on dulcimer playing. Today, thanks to Ritchie and others, there are many groups, like the Red River Dulcimer Ensemble, committed to playing and building dulcimers.



to *America's Music*, Crawford claims that "folk music" is dominated by performers who seek continuity with the past as opposed to "classical music" where composers project their authority through precise musical notation or "popular music" where performers alter less-precise scores to suit their own artistic visions. Something must also be said of patronage.

Whereas classical music has typically been the domain of the wealthy and intellectual classes, folk music has been seen as belonging to the people ("the folk" in other words) and largely performed by amateur musicians rather than trained professionals. No matter, at least since the turn of the twentieth century, academics including ethnomusicologists and others have been engaged in studying and preserving folk music and, no later than the 1940s, folk musicians like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger have also become popular icons. Guthrie, Seeger, and especially later figures like Bob Dylan and Paul Simon have even made their careers from writing and performing "new" folksongs of their own creation. These blurred lines point to reality, rather than to the compartmentalized little boxes into which record labels like to sort music. Indeed, much of the music we hear tonight falls somewhere between the domains of folk and popular.

The study of folksong initially centered on its texts rather than its melodies. Between 1882 and 1898, the Harvard professor Francis James Child published five volumes of his collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, in which he cataloged 305 ballad texts and their variants with the aim of uncovering the most authentic versions; these are casually referred to as the Child ballads today. Ballads, which consist of many

"Folk music" is an admittedly ambiguous term, but one which effectively distinguishes its particulars from those of either "classical" or "popular" music—the other major genres of music according to Richard Crawford. In his volume, *An Introduction*

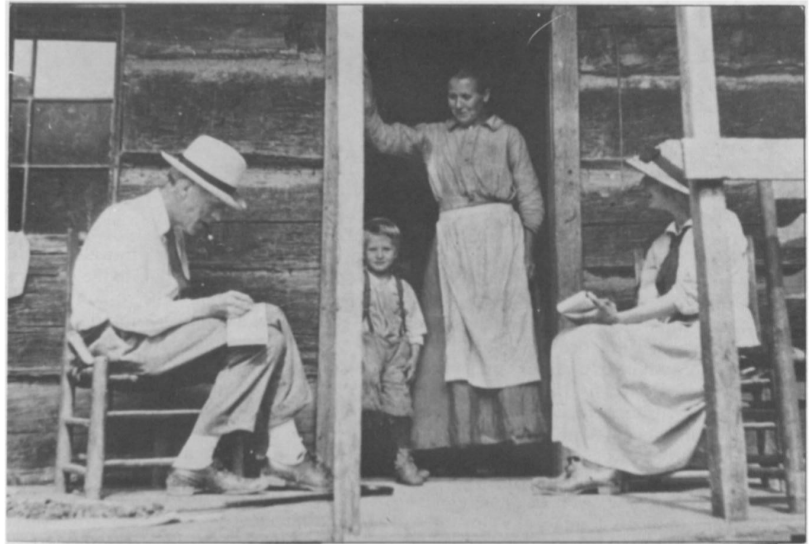
verses set to a repeated melody, would often tell of a newsworthy event, such as a murder or a bank robbery. Their catchy melodies would ensure that their messages made it, more-or-less unadulterated, to the next hearer. As

demonstrated by Child and later Cecil Sharp, the English scholar who travelled to rural Appalachia to collect ballads, these folksongs were even capable of crossing oceans. Sharp found among the residents of isolated mountain communities in North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia many of the same melodies which he had earlier collected in England. Here, however, was a much more vigorous, multi-generational tradition than what remained in England where only a handful of elderly singers remembered the melodies. His American colleague, Olive Dame Campbell, from Massachusetts, pursued music other than ballads, including hymns, popular tunes, and instrumental melodies. Together, Sharp and Campbell published their volume, *English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, in 1917; this time, unlike Child, they transcribed and printed the melodies as well as the texts. The ballad, “Barbara Allen,” a traditional Scottish ballad and number eighty-four in Child’s catalog, has had particularly impressive staying power: its earliest known reference is in the 1660s and, even three hundred years later, it was a favorite of some folk rockers!

At approximately the same time that Sharp and Campbell were travelling Appalachia, John Lomax was beginning his own career as a collector of folksongs, in his case working in the American Southwest. Lomax had grown up in Texas and, while attending Harvard, his professors encouraged him to explore the music of his home state. In 1910, he published his *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, which included “Home On the Range” among others, before pursuing a career in banking. By 1933 though, Lomax had become the curator of the Archive of American Folksong, based at the Library of Congress, and with his son, Alan Lomax, began travelling across the country to record folk music. They were particularly interested in African-American folk music and ended up at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola where they recorded Huddie Ledbetter, better-known as “Lead Belly,” for the first time. Deeply impressed, they arranged his parole from Governor O. K. Allen. Lead Belly would become one of the most revered folk and blues musicians of his era, introducing to the American public songs like “Goodnight, Irene,” and “Midnight Special.” McKinley Morganfield, or “Muddy Waters,” was another discovery of Alan Lomax who he visited and first recorded at Stovall Plantation near Clarksdale, Mississippi in 1941 and 1943; Muddy Waters was then playing delta blues in the style of Son House and Robert Johnson, but, within a few years, he would relocate to Chicago and pioneer electric blues. Alan Lomax would also record and help reignite the career of Jelly Roll Morton, the jazz pianist from New Orleans.

These same folk repertoires which interested the scholarly collectors, however, also interested commercial entities, namely record companies and radio stations. In the 1920s, the genre of country music emerged as urban businessmen sought-out rural musicians to fuel their record sales and fill their airwaves. Initially, most of these musicians were amateurs from Appalachia who would sing and play at family, church, and community gatherings and knew the folksongs and other music

of their region. Most significantly, in summer sessions in 1927, Victor executive Ralph Peer recorded A. P., Sara, and Maybelle Carter—the so-called Carter Family remembered for songs like “Can the Circle Be Unbroken” and “Keep On the Sunny Side”—as well as Jimmie Rodgers, known for his blue yodels. This earliest country music maintained many of its allegiances to Appalachian folk traditions, even though the majority of songs were newly written. The 1930s and 1940s witnessed their divergence as the image shifted to the Western cowboy and popular jazz elements also entered the music. Especially through the radio program known as the *Louisiana Hayride*, broadcast from the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium, Cajun music also entered the mix. Country star Hank Williams, who



**English collector Cecil Sharp transcribes folksongs in Knott County, Kentucky.**

often played on the *Hayride*, first recorded “Jambalaya” in 1952. One of his most famous songs, it glorifies Cajun life and Louisiana cooking while imitating the sound world of Cajun music and employing several Cajun names and words in its text. Another song, “You Are My Sunshine,” has little to do with Cajun music, but was written in 1939 by the Louisiana country singer and future governor, Jimmie Davis.

As the genre of country music expanded, so did the notion of folk music and its corresponding genre. Whereas Alan Lomax was interested in expanding the study of folk music beyond Anglo-American repertoires, his associates Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger were also keen to create new songs concerned with contemporary issues but which still adhered to the conventions of folksong. Guthrie, born in Oklahoma, suffered through the Great Depression and Dust Bowl of the 1930s, so that he was motivated to bring politics into his music. His allegiances were with the lower classes, and many of the songs he wrote and sang espouse his Communist beliefs and advocate for social reforms. His song, “This Land is Your Land,” for example, rails against private property and the indifference of the powerful classes to the needs of working people. Pete Seeger, whose father was the ethnomusicologist and composer Charles Seeger, was drawn to folksong after attending the





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## Notes, continued

Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, North Carolina in 1936 and, within three years, was working for Alan Lomax at the Archive of American Folksong. Seeger and Guthrie met in March 1940 following a “Grapes of Wrath” concert benefiting migrant workers, and the two became fast friends, bonding over shared artistic and political visions. They and other colleagues founded the Almanac Singers around this time to oppose American entry into World War II; after the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, the Almanacs supported the war effort, at least until their members were drafted and could no longer perform together. Guthrie even imprinted on his guitar the message, “This Machine Kills Fascists,” suggesting the power of politically-charged music to fight tyranny.

Although Guthrie’s career was cut-short by Huntington’s disease, Seeger continued to be musically and politically active throughout the twentieth century, gaining renown for songs like “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” and “Turn! Turn! Turn!” Seeger would also support the causes of the counterculture of the 1960s and promote its musicians, including Bob Dylan who electrified folk music when he appeared at the Newport Folk Festival of 1965 with a rock band and performed his songs “Maggie’s Farm” and “Like a Rolling Stone.” The Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, and Simon and Garfunkel would also pursue their own versions of folk rock. Today, the idioms of these musicians often constitute our impression of folk music, even if folk rock is but one, recent application of traditional musical practices to something which is largely foreign (i.e. rock music). Indeed, the amateurism and continuity which define folk music are mostly absent from folk rock, created by professional musicians and audio engineers and primarily consisting in the performance of new songs in a manner only loosely connected to traditional performance approaches. Regardless, folk rock has secured traditional folk music a place in the popular imagination of contemporary America, a place it might have lost altogether had newer popular music totally supplanted folk music in the wake of recording and the popular genres it has fostered. In other words, certain folksongs, such as “Sloop John B,” have lived on as popular songs. This was a folksong from the Bahamas, first collected by Richard Le Gallienne and later published by the poet Carl Sandburg in his 1927 collection, *The American Songbag*. Today, it is mostly known as a Beach Boys song through its inclusion on their 1966 album, *Pet Sounds*.

Religion has proven another place where older music can survive in the memory of an entire community. For example, most Christians in this country know the tune and lyrics to “Amazing Grace,” even though they were written more than two hundred years ago. The Anglican



Folk musicians Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie

clergyman and abolitionist John Newton published his hymn text “Amazing Grace” in 1779 without a set melody. Then in 1847 the American composer William Walker aligned Newton’s text with the melody, *New Britain*, for his shape-note hymnal, *Southern Harmony*. The text relates the saving power of grace as well as God’s faithfulness to his followers. Not only has this remained a popular hymn across several denominations, it has also gained secular acceptance through its use by folk musicians in the 1960s. “I Saw the Light” is another Hank Williams song, although its melody is much older than this country musician’s 1948 release. The melody actually belongs to a Scottish folksong, “Bonnie Charlie” also known as “Will Ye No Come Back Again?” which bemoans that Bonnie Prince Charlie, the last Scottish claimant to the British throne, has fled Great Britain for France. In the accelerated Hank Williams version with its text on redemption, this song has been recorded by numerous country and gospel singers. Within the Jewish faith, “Hevenu Shalom Aleichem” is a well-known folksong. Its words in the Hebrew language offer the simple message, “We bring peace to you.” In all three cases, these religious songs have tremendous personal meaning which, when partnered with catchy tunes, have ensured they have been remembered and preserved.

Some amount of change is inevitable, however. Recall that folk music strives for continuity and not exact recreation, if that were even possible. Like folk music, bluegrass also aspires to continuity, specifically with the string bands and banjo picking of traditional Appalachian music. Bluegrass is said to have emerged when, in 1945, the Kentucky-born mandolin player Bill Monroe hired guitarist Lester Flatt and banjoist Earl Scruggs for his band, the Blue Grass Boys. As mainstream country music was turning to Western imagery, these bluegrass musicians sought to maintain their connection with Appalachian music.

Yet, their music is also distinguished from older traditions through its extended reliance on breakdowns: instrumental interludes which showcase the virtuosity of individual players. The tune, “Foggy Mountain Breakdown,” composed by Scruggs in 1949, is a particularly well-known example. Another, “Chinese Breakdown,” which we hear tonight, predates bluegrass; it was first recorded in 1925 by the Dixie String Band, although the melody was already widespread across North America and Great Britain. “Old Joe Clark,” which began as an Appalachian ballad about a mountaineer murdered in 1885, had become a popular fiddle tune and competition piece as of the early twentieth century. Songs with the designation “waltz” in their titles, like the “Carolina,” “Tennessee,” and Monroe’s own “Kentucky Waltz,” are also common in bluegrass, country, and traditional Appalachian repertoires and suggest a fondness for dancing among their target audiences. Songs titled “rag,” such as the “Black Mountain Rag,” are also not unusual; though the rag began in African-American communities in the late nineteenth century, it was quickly marketed to white audiences, even rural ones.

That bluegrass, a genre with popular music origins and which itself has been commercially successful, would be included on a program dedicated to folk music is not unprecedented, nor should it be unexpected. Monroe for his part described bluegrass as “the old southern sound, that was heard years ago, many, many, years ago in the backwoods, at country dances.” Yet, those involved in the folk revival also admitted bluegrass into the traditional sphere. Mike Seeger, half-brother to Pete, was an early advocate of bluegrass as folk music. On behalf of the Folkways label, founded by Moses Asch in 1948 “to record and document the entire world of sound,” Mike Seeger produced the first full-length bluegrass LPs in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He drew on regional musicians and he himself also recorded, performing solo and as a member of the

# Notes, continued

New Lost City Ramblers. The mission of Folkways, “to record and document the entire world of sound,” might seem lofty, but it is also very American—unworried about national or ethnic lines. It is, furthermore, a goal worthy of folk music—the music of the people, whomever those people might be. Woody Guthrie believed in this goal when he performed songs like “This Land is Your Land” and Pete Seeger when he sang the South African, “Wimoweh,” and the Cuban, “Guantanamera.” After Asch died in 1986, the entire Folkways collection of 2,168 albums was transferred to the Smithsonian Institute and has formed the core of their recorded archives under the condition that these recordings would always be available to the public. Tonight, when we hear a diverse program made up of music from around the world, let us not focus on its differences but its similarities.

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**About Jackson.** Jackson Harmeyer graduated with his Master of Music in Music History and Literature from the University of Louisville in May 2019 following the completion of his thesis, “Liminal Aesthetics: Perspectives on Harmony and Timbre in the Music of Olivier Messiaen, Tristan Murail, and Kaija Saariaho.” He has shared this pioneering research at the American Musicological Society South-Central Chapter’s annual meetings in Asheville, NC and Sewanee, TN and at the University of Tennessee Contemporary Music Festival in Knoxville, TN; in March 2020, he will present at the Music by Women Festival in Columbus, MS. During Jackson’s studies in Louisville, he was the recipient of the Gerhard Herz Music History Scholarship and was employed at the Dwight D. Anderson Memorial Music Library where he did archival work



for the unique Grawemeyer Collection which houses scores, recordings, and documentation for over five thousand entries by the world’s leading contemporary composers. Previously, Jackson graduated *summa cum laude* from the Louisiana Schol-

ars’ College in Natchitoches, LA. Then, from 2014 to 2016, Jackson served as director of the successful chamber music series, Abendmusik Alexandria. He has remained a concert annotator and organizer, acting as Director of Scholarship of the annual Sugarmill Music Festival. A special project he is developing for the 2020 festival, “A Scholarly Presentation in Lecture and Music: Solomon Northup in the Central Louisiana Sugarhouse,” has recently been awarded a prestigious Rebirth Grant by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Aside from his studies, he is a composer, choral singer, music blogger, avid reader, and award-winning nature photographer.

Read additional program notes by Jackson at  
[www.JacksonHarmeyer.com](http://www.JacksonHarmeyer.com)

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**TUESDAY, APR. 7**

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