

Carrying On A Family Tradition: The Family Blend Performs At February 10th Gathering Concert

On Friday, February 10, our Gathering will feature **The Family Blend**. The hour-long concert begins at 7:30 PM in the Bryant Recital Hall of the Sloan-Morgan Building, 1220 Elizabeth Avenue, on the main CPCC campus. Gatherings are free and open to the public; donations are always appreciated.

The Family Blend is carrying on a musical tradition rooted in the mountains of North Carolina and passed down through several generations. This unique group, as their name implies, is a blended family band comprised of Ashley DeBruhl, Morgan Wilder, Charles DeBruhl and Randy DeBruhl. They play, as their name also implies, a blend of musical styles including traditional, old time, gospel, country, and bluegrass.

Ashley DeBruhl is fifteen years old and has played fiddle for three years. She is a former student of Jon Singleton. Ashley sings lead and harmony with the group. Ashley is a ninth grader at Northwest School of the Arts where she has studied dance, art, musical



The Family Blend (left to right, Randy DeBruhl, Charles DeBruhl, Morgan Wilder, Ashley DeBruhl)

theater, and photography. She loves to write songs. **The Family Blend** has recorded one of her songs, **Run Kitty, Run**. Ashley was awarded a scholarship by the Swannanoa Gathering in 2004 to attend Old Time Week and she continues to enjoy attending the Gatherings and other music festivals with her family.

Morgan Wilder is fifteen and one-half years old and plays mandolin and sings lead and harmony. Morgan credits Glen Alexander for having the major influence

on her playing. Morgan is in the tenth grade at J. M. Robinson High School. She is an honor student and participates on the varsity swim and soccer teams. She enjoys reading all types of books, drawing, and scuba diving and would love to work with a manatee rescue program. She aspires to enter the United States Coast Guard Academy after high school and possibly play in their bluegrass band. Morgan was awarded a scholarship by the Swannanoa Gathering in 2004 to

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NC Masters Joe Thompson And Bob Carlin In Concert

On Thursday, February 16, legendary fiddler Joe Thompson and clawhammer banjo master Bob Carlin will perform in concert at 6:30 PM in the Francis Auditorium on the lower level of the Main Library, 310 North Tryon Street, in downtown Charlotte. The event is jointly presented by the Levine Museum of the New South, the Charlotte Folk Society, and the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Admission will be \$12 for the general public and \$8 for CFS and museum members. Space is limited; reservations are required. Call 704-333-1887, extension 501, to reserve your place. Free parking is available in Seventh Street Station; bring your parking ticket to the concert for validation.

Born on December 9, 1918, Joe Thompson is one of the most historically important American traditional performers active today. He represents a tradition of African American string band fiddling now all but vanished. Born into a North Carolina farming family that can date its musical roots to before the Civil War, Joe was playing fiddle by the age of five. He and his banjo-playing brother, Nate, were regular musicians at frolics and square dances for friends and neighbors, both black and white,

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attend Old Time Week and was the 2005 recipient of the Marilyn Meacham Price Scholarship from the Charlotte Folk Society to the Swannanoa Gathering.

Charles DeBruhl is seventeen years old and a junior at Resurrection Christian School. He has played bass for three years. Charles is a natural performer and never suffers from stage fright before a performance. Charles loves working with small children and animals. He has volunteered many hours after school working with pre-school children at Hope Haven. Charles also enjoys playing on the varsity basketball team for Resurrection Christian. He looks forward to attending the Swannanoa Gathering each summer.

Randy DeBruhl is the father/step-father and plays guitar and banjo with **The Family Blend**. He also plays banjo with the **New Dixie Pharaohs**, a local bluegrass band. Randy grew up in a musical family and began playing banjo at nine years of age. He played banjo professionally in Nashville for three years with **Redwing**.

The family's musical heritage can be traced back for several generations in the mountains of western North Carolina. Popular 1930s recording artists Wade and J. E. Mainer are relatives (Randy's great-uncles). Wade and J. E. Mainer were first taught to play the banjo and fiddle by their brother-in-law, Roscoe Banks (Randy's grandfather). Wade Mainer learned to play on Roscoe's banjo, which is the same instrument that Randy learned to play on. This banjo, an early 1900s S.S. Stewart, will be used during this performance. Wade Mainer, recipient of a CFS Folk Heritage Award in 1994, is 99 years old. He now lives in Flint, Michigan

and is still performing. Two years ago he performed on the Grand Ole Opry with his wife, Julia Mae. A live phone hook-up with Wade Mainer is scheduled during **The Family Blend's** performance. They will also be performing one of the songs that Wade Mainer recorded in the 1930s.

At the conclusion of the concert, we'll take a short refreshment break. You are then invited to join a song circle or bring your instruments for a jam session. Free parking is available in the Staff Parking Deck, accessed off Fourth Street, between Independence Boulevard and Kings Drive.

For more information about J. E. and Wade Mainer, visit www.folksociety.org.

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while the boys were still so young that their feet dangled above the floor when they sat on straight chairs to play. Until musical tastes changed after World War II, Joe and Nate kept alive the tradition of the fiddle and banjo duet.

Joe was "discovered" during a '70s revival of interest in African American folk music. Joined on banjo by his cousin Odell Thompson, Joe performed all around the country, from the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Washington State to New York City's Carnegie Hall. In 1991, the North Carolina Arts Council recognized the Thompsons' cultural contributions by presenting them with the state's prestigious Heritage

Award. Since Odell's untimely death in 1994, Joe has performed with Bob Carlin and other white musicians. The black string band tradition appeared to be in danger of disappearing until recently, when Joe began passing on the legacy to young African American musicians Rhiannon Giddens and Justin Robinson, who visit him frequently in his Mebane home.

Bob Carlin is probably the best-known clawhammer style banjo player performing today. As well, he's an experienced folklore collector, fieldworker, and recording producer. Last year, his interests and years of research culminated in the publication of his book, **String Bands in the North Carolina Piedmont**.

Bob has taken the distinctive southern banjo style to appreciative audiences all over the world. For six years he toured with the late John Hartford's band; since Hartford's death in 2001, he's returned to solo performing. Bob is three-time winner of the late **Frets Magazine** (now known as **Acoustic Guitar Magazine**) readers' poll, and has four Rounder albums and several instructional manuals and videos for the banjo to his credit.

The February 16th concert will showcase the talents of these

two talented and accomplished musicians. Together, Joe and Bob will entertain you and give you a glimpse into another time – an age when families and friends would gather in homes to socialize and dance to the music of fiddle and banjo.



Joe Thompson (photo by Lissa Gottwals)