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March 7, 2018

Four-Time Grand Master National Champion will Lead Classes for Students and Teachers

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—An award-winning violinist will lead workshops at Gardner-Webb

Photo of Mark O'Connor

University for students and music educators. Mark O'Connor, four-time Grand Master National Champion and three-time Grammy winner, will teach students of all ages and skill levels on March 24 and conduct a teacher training on April 2-3 on the GWU campus.

O'Connor teaches all American styles, from classical orchestral music to bluegrass, country and jazz, said Dr. Patricia Sparti, GWU Professor of Music. "He teaches, from day one, technique, reading and improvisation," Sparti added. "His method has the discipline of Suzuki, the reading of a traditional method, but also develops ear training."

At age 13, O'Connor became the youngest person ever to win the Grand Master Fiddler Championships. In his 20s, he was a member of the ground-breaking acoustic band, Strength in Numbers, with music legends, Bela Fleck, Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas and Edgar Meyer. O'Connor has sold over 2 million albums, and recorded with Dolly Parton, James Taylor, Paul Simon, Randy Travis, and more. His 2016 release with the O'Connor Band received a Grammy nomination for "Best Bluegrass Album" after spending nearly six months at the top of Billboard's bluegrass album chart.

Despite all of his accomplishments, O'Connor is not intimidating, Sparti observed. "Mark puts you at ease immediately, and he is very encouraging," she said. "He is genuinely interested in helping people."

The string workshop for beginning students to professionals will be held March 24 from 3 to 7 p.m. in Dover Theatre, located inside the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center. O'Connor will teach technique, improvisation, bowings, folk music, bluegrass, jazz, country and all-American styles. The workshop is free to all GWU students and is \$10 for everyone else, however, scholarships are available.

The teacher training with certification will be April 2-3 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days in Gardner Hall on Quad Drive. The O'Connor Method is designed to guide students gradually through the development of pedagogical and musical techniques necessary to become a proficient, well-rounded musician. The violinist's 10-book series incorporates some of America's most endearing music to develop left-hand technique, bowing skill and ear training. The cost for the seminar is \$250 for those seeking to certify.

To register, email psparti@gardner-webb.edu, text or call 704-466-4710.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.