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4-12-2013

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April 12, 2013

School of Performing and Visual Arts Presents Unique Production April 21

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University's School of Performing and Visual Arts annual Choral Union Concert will be something completely different from its traditional performances when they present

"The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass" on Sunday, April 21 at 3 p.m. in the Dover Theatre, located in the Lutz Yelton Convocation Center. The concert is free and open to the community.

Well-known composers in history like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven wrote masses that are still performed today. Now comes "The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass," blending the classical mass, modern choral sophistication, poetry and even traditional bluegrass instrumentation into a unique musical experience.

"It's written in a classical style," said Dr. Paul Etter, director of choral activities and coordinator of sacred music at GWU. "It's not a bluegrass production per se, but instead is a serious choral work that is taken from a very contemporary point of view combining the sacred classical choral tradition that follows the basic instrumental principals of bluegrass – the banjo, mandolin, and fiddle."

Written by Carol Barnett and Marisha Chamberlain, "The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass" has been performed all across the nation, including a performance at the world famous Carnegie Hall in New York City.

"When I found out about this production, it was around the time that Earl Scruggs had passed away. This is somewhat of a tipping of our hat to him," said Etter.

Scruggs, a pioneer in bluegrass music, grew up just a few miles away from GWU in the Flint Hill community. He was a Grammy Award winner and was inducted into both the Country Music Hall of Fame and the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame. Scruggs passed away in March 2012. The Earl Scruggs Center: Music and Stories from the American South will honor its native son by showcasing the history and cultural traditions of this region, and the contributions of Scruggs, who developed a unique 3-finger playing style that continues influencing musicians today. The center is located in uptown Shelby, N.C., and is expected to open in the near future.

Etter said, “Students were skeptical in the beginning when I introduced this production to them. It stretched me as well, as I had to get out of my comfort zone. Now the students and I have come to appreciate what this is all about and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience.”

More information about the School of Performing and Visual Arts – music division, including this event are available at 704-406-4448.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).