

WCU'S SMOKY MOUNTAIN BRASS QUINTET TO PERFORM IN WNC PRIOR TO UK TOUR

Do you want to hear the tunes Western Carolina University's Smoky Mountain Brass Quintet will be playing this spring as it tours the United Kingdom, but you don't really want to cash in those frequent flier miles?

Never fear. The ensemble, the resident faculty brass quintet at WCU, is planning a series of performances across Western North Carolina beginning Friday, March 24, prior to its overseas trip to England, Wales and Ireland.

The UK excursion May 8-16 is the second annual international tour for the SMBQ, which participated last year in the International Romantic Trumpet Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Stops on the upcoming trip include concerts at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in Galway, Ireland; the Royal Welch College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, Wales; and the University of Wales-Swansea. The quintet also will be performing a children's concert at the King Henry VIII School in Coventry, England, and joining the Jaguar Brass Band of Coventry in a benefit concert.

"We are very excited about this tour because it will help build Western's already active relationships with institutions in Galway and Swansea," said P. Bradley Ulrich, professor of trumpet at WCU. "Since this year has been named 'the year to promote study abroad,' we feel the timing of this tour could not be better."

Quintet members, in addition to Ulrich, are David Ginn, trumpet; Alan F. Mattingly, horn; Daniel Cherry, trombone; and Michael Schallock, tuba. The group has been in existence since 1993 and performs a wide range of music from early music and classical to ragtime, jazz and contemporary compositions.



Smoky Mountain Brass Quintet

The recital performances across WNC and in the UK will feature music from the Southern Appalachian region of the United States, including selections by several past and present WCU composers. Mark Connor, theory and composition teacher at WCU wrote, "Persistent Echoes" for the tour. This one-movement piece is based on melody "Sweet Prospect" from the Southern Harmony, a shape-note hymnbook published in the mid-1800's in the Southern Appalachian region. The ensemble also will perform "Four Hymn Tune Settings" by Paul Basler, a WCU faculty member from 1989 until 1992, and a new three-movement composition based on Cherokee Indian music by Robert Kehrberg, interim dean of WCU's College of Arts and Sciences.

"We are especially proud and excited to be performing Dr. Kehrberg's latest piece, which was commissioned by the SMBQ especially for this occasion," said Ulrich. "This multi-movement piece reflects on the recorded music of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee and creates new music based on the rhythmic and melodic material found in these recordings."

The performance with the Jaguar Brass Band is a benefit concert to help the group raise funds to come to the United States in November for the U.S. Open Brass Band Championships. "I met members of this ensemble while performing with the Brass Band of Central Florida at the British Open Brass Band Championships in England this past September," said Ulrich. "These musicians were extremely helpful and friendly to all of us. When I heard their band was trying to earn money to come to the U.S. Open Championship, I contacted them and offered the SMBQ's services on a benefit concert."

SMBQ concerts in WNC this spring and summer include:

Friday, March 24 – Unity Concert Series, Unity Center in Asheville, 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door.

Tuesday, April 4 – Catamount Concert Series, recital hall of the Coulter Building, WCU, 8 p.m. Admission is free.

Sunday, May 7 – Macon County Arts Council Concert Series, First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, 2 p.m. Admission is free.

Wednesday, July 5 – Highlands Interlude Program, First Presbyterian Church in Highlands, 2 p.m. Admission is free.

For more information about the SMBQ, call Ulrich at (828) 227-3274 or visit the Web site www.smbq.com.