

The Appalachian musical heritage

Anthropologist finds culture in Southern mountain music

By **KIM DONEHOWER**
Staff Writer

"People have stereotyped images of the Appalachian mountains," says Jack Bernhardt. "They tend to think of people (there) as barefoot, chewing on a corncob pipe on the porch and whittling all day long, but it's just not true." There is a well-developed artistic culture in these mountains, a culture whose vitality parallels Bernhardt's enthusiasm for it.

Jack Bernhardt is an anthropologist who has chosen as his area of focus the musical heritage of the mountains of southwest Virginia and northwest North Carolina. "There's a center of musical tradition that focuses around Galax, Va., and Mt. Airy, N.C.," he says. "(The region has) traditionally, since the 19th century, been a very central area for traditional music which originated in the British Isles, then transformed into old-timey music, bluegrass and country."

Although quite an enthusiast of the music itself, Bernhardt's interest is based on his anthropological perspective. "I'm interested in the music, but as a cultural phenomenon and not just music," he says. "One of my main interests is how and why the music has remained so strong in that particular region of the country. In other parts of the United States and in the Southeast, where that music once reigned supreme, it's no longer practiced."

Bernhardt attributes this regional longevity to an intense sense of pride among the people in their culture and heritage, which manifests itself in such institutions as the Galax Fiddler's Convention. Local radio stations and record labels in the area also promote continuing visibility of the music. "There's a long tradition

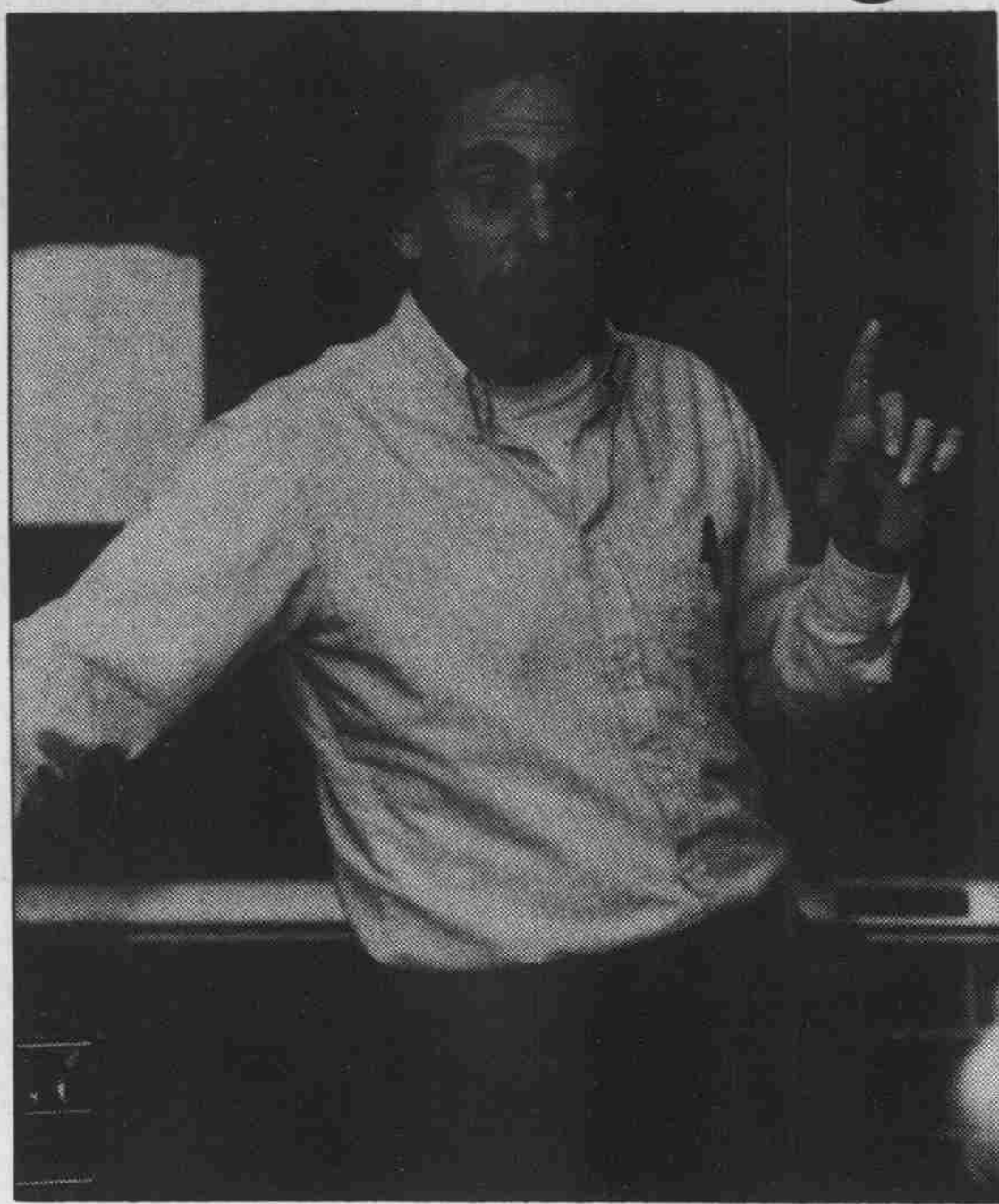
of interest," he says. "People have been on the cutting edge of the recording of this music, of promoting it, of preserving it, throughout this century."

Bernhardt, who currently resides in Durham, researches this tradition by frequent trips to the Galax/Mt. Airy region to "spend time around the music," to learn and listen to the music itself and to collect oral histories from key musicians involved. "I try to get an idea through their experiences of what the culture was like back at that time, and how they fit into it," he says.

Luckily, there are still musicians living in the Galax area who participated in the original country recording boom of the 1920s. Oral histories also prove valuable because of a tradition of handing down songs and playing styles through local families and their acquaintances.

Originally from Canton, Ohio, Bernhardt arrived in this area by way of New York City, where he taught anthropology and worked towards his doctorate at Columbia University. While he was working on his dissertation, he left for a self-determined tour of the Virginia mountains, and eventually came to Galax, where people, culture and musical heritage were soon to prove as the focus of his anthropological and artistic interest. Bernhardt remains actively involved in the region, where he recently emceed a county fair and helped videotape a music festival. Such involvement allows him close, relaxed contact with the people and their culture, and provides a lot of entertainment as well.

In addition to being involved in the continuing education program at Duke University, Bernhardt is currently teaching a course at the



DTH/Charlotte Cannon

Jack Bernhardt lectures to his Southern music class at the ArtsCenter

ArtsCenter in Carrboro, entitled "Southern Music and Its Heritage." Bernhardt describes the class as a study of the "chronological development of the culture and the history of the music," from its origin in the British Isles through its development among Appalachian settlers, under the varying influences of time, such as the recording industry of the 1920s and the tide of post-World War II optimism that sparked the development of bluegrass. For Bernhardt,

music becomes a cultural, historical teaching tool that provides both questions and answers to the heritage of the Southern mountains.

The use of music in an anthropological context gives vitality to cultural study, mirrored by Bernhardt's obvious enthusiasm for every aspect of mountain heritage. Contact with Bernhardt and his work effectively dispels any images of the Appalachian mountains as a cultureless, backward society.

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Speech

Parrot related the non-sexual situation to a sexual situation. It is easier to be more assertive in a non-sexual situation than in a sexual one, she said.

For instance, smoking is a subject that can be freely discussed at Thanksgiving dinner with Grandmom, Parrot said, but masturbation is not.

Also the language used to discuss sex is vague. There are 3,000 terms to describe the vulva and 2,000 to describe the penis, Parrot said.

"If a person uses one of the 2,000 terms that I don't know, we can't have conversation and know what each other is saying," she said.

Kissing or "grubbing" are not hazardous to a person's health, she said. But people know that inhaling smoke is a health hazard.

"We don't wear signs around our necks saying, 'Only kissing on first

date, grubbing not until the second date and intercourse not until the tenth date,'" Parrot said. But "No Smoking" signs are posted on many walls, she said.

Parrot asked the audience members what messages they received from their parents, their male and female acquaintances, religion and the media.

In the episode of "Moonlighting" when David and Maddie finally got together, Maddie yelled and screamed and asked David to leave her house. He grabbed her, kissed her and she melted. The episode, viewed

by 40 percent of the national viewing public, gave a clear message that men don't listen to women, Parrot said.

"Going to a room with a drunk guy is poor judgment and increases vulnerability," Parrot said. But poor judgment does not shift the blame of the crime.

When a person leaves his car door unlocked, he is leaving his car

vulnerable to a crime. But if the car is stolen, she said, the owner of the car is not charged with a crime.

A person may let someone drive her car and have nothing happen to it. If the same person borrows the car a second time and it is stolen, the car's owner is not charged with the crime, Parrot said.

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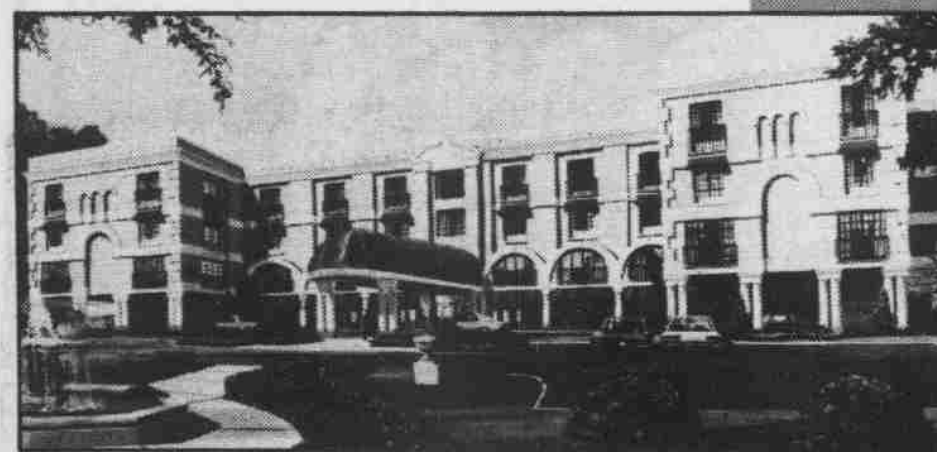
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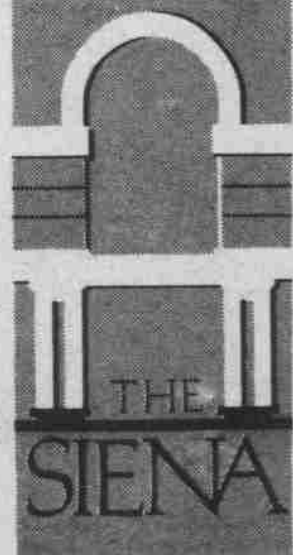


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Art department celebrates 50 years of quality education

By **SCOTT COWEN**
Staff Writer

Last weekend the art department celebrated its 50th birthday with two days of dancing, dining and reflecting.

Over the past half century the department, which was founded by then-UNC president Frank Porter Graham in 1937, has grown tremendously since the days when only two classes were taught. Today the department, which is often called one of the best in the Southeast, has 18 faculty members teaching about 75 art history classes and more than 30 courses in studio art. Enrollment has climbed to about 12,000 a year and according to administrative manager Catherine Stibbing, the program has more students than it can handle.

Professor Robert Barnard, who has been with the department since 1961, said that the facilities have changed greatly but the basic idea of maintaining quality education has remained. He said that when the department was in the museum's present location, some students would be in the basement doing chainsaw sculpture and others in the library next door could not hear themselves think. In studio art, only courses such as sculpture, painting, drawing and ceramics existed. Printmaking and crafts were added later. "The philosophy was towards excellence in what we could do," Barnard said.

Today the studio art program continues the ideal of high quality. Barnard said that UNC is not an art school and therefore limits the classes the department offers. "(We're) more concerned with our part in the general humanities program," he said. "Both advanced graduates and novice

undergraduates can get a very deep and meaningful experience in art after touching on a lot of different things."

In the early years the art history curriculum was restricted because of its limited resources. "We had to concentrate on what we had," said Barnard. Since then, with an expanded library and an increased slide collection, topics covered by the curriculum have broadened. The department started a doctorate program in art history with the idea that it would be one of the nation's finest. The first degree was awarded in 1968.

Arthur Marks, art department chairman, said that the department's main strength is its faculty, which includes established senior members as well as dynamic junior members. He added that because UNC is a research university, the faculty is alive and thinking, which encourages positive interaction among the faculty. According to Marks, the department is one of few in the country that offers graduate degrees in both fine arts (studio) and art history.

Marks said that the department was ranked 14th overall and second in improvement in a national poll of art departments conducted about seven or eight years ago. "We have the number one art department in the southeast," he said. However, he added, "We will never be able to match the institutes in major cities, especially in the northeast, because of location."

As for the future, the department wants to add photography to its studio curriculum but lacks the needed funds. The art history department hopes to add architectural history and a non-Western class such as African or Islamic art.

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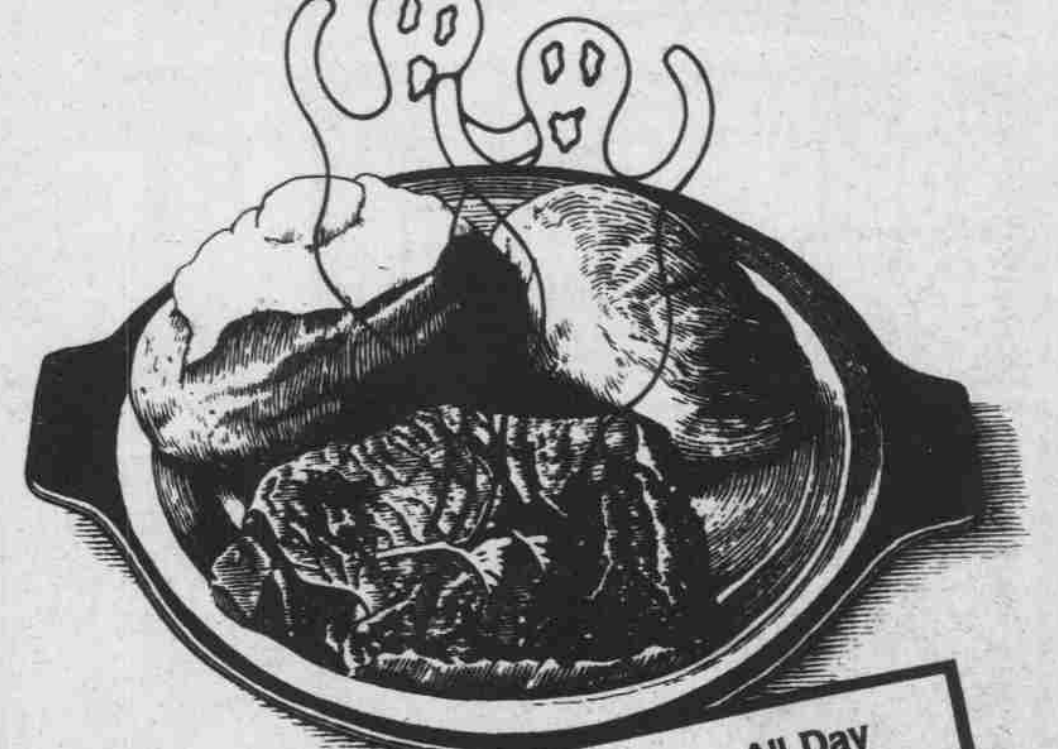
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