

UCSD to kick off blues-and-border music series with Oct. 29 colloquium on "Jazzing up France" in the 20th Century

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UCSD TO KICK OFF BLUES-AND-BORDER MUSIC SERIES WITH OCT. 29 COLLOQUIUM ON "JAZZING UP FRANCE" IN THE 20th CENTURY

Jazzing Up France: Music, Modernity, and Identity in the First Half of the 20th Century will be the topic of an Oct. 29 colloquium at the University of California, San Diego campus. The event, which will feature Denis-Constant Martin, will kick off a year-long Blues-and Border Music Series sponsored by UCSD's African and African- American Studies Research Project (AAASRP). All events are free and open to the public.

The climax of the Blues-and-Border Music Series will be a public lecture- performance Feb. 18 by well-known blues musician and songwriter Maurice "Mighty Mo" Rodgers, who will visit UCSD for a week in February as a Regents' Lecturer. The series will culminate with a symposium in May on "Borders, Boundaries, and New Frontiers," which will include performances by guest musicians and lectures by musicologists and scholars.

"Music is one of the most interesting and effective vehicles for border crossings," said Bennetta Jules-Rosette, a professor of sociology at UCSD and director of AAASRP. "Beyond the tracing of African roots of blues, jazz, and other musical forms, we can identify recrossings in the contemporary collaborations of African and African diasporic musicians and performers around the world. For example, Malian musician Ali Farka Toure was inspired by the Mississippi blues of John Lee Hooker, with whom he performed over two decades in Paris. A constant interaction of musical forms across borders creates the cultural exchanges and blendings of people in migrations and motion."

The Oct. 29 "Jazzing Up France" event will take place from 2:00 to 4 p.m., at the UCSD Division of Social Sciences, Room 104. Denis-Constant Martin, an ethnomusicologist and political scientist and the director of research at the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques in Paris, will address how jazz was used in France in the 1920s and 1930s to discuss important social issues related to French identity, exoticism in French society, and the participation of France in a world of modernity.

Martin, an authority on the relationship of music and culture to political movements in Africa and the African diaspora (the U.S., Caribbean, and France), is the author of numerous publications, including one of the first French scholarly studies on reggae music, "Aux Sources du Reggae," (1988), and a history of gospel music in the U.S., "Gospel: From Spirituals to Religious Rap" (1998). He is also the author of the 1999 book "The Battle Behind the Mask: Cape Town's Coon Carnival. Martin is also a founding editor and a frequent contributor to Jazz Magazine in Paris.

On Feb. 18, 2000, a Blues-and-Border Music Workshop with Maurice "Mighty Mo" Rodgers will be held, with presentations from prominent musicologists and scholars. The workshop will be followed by a 7 p.m. public lecture-concert by Rodgers on Metaphysical Blues: New Frontiers in Music Making at the UCSD Price Center.

Rodgers, who performs under the pseudonym of "Mighty Mo," is a composer, lyricist, and keyboardist with his own ensemble, as well as a scholar who has conducted research on blues as metaphysical music. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rodgers was also a successful music producer in the blues and soul music genres, working with Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and the legendary Motown Records. He has also performed with blues legends such as Albert Collins, T-Bone Walker, Bobby Bland, and Jimmy Reed.

After receiving his master's degree from California State University, Dominguez Hills, Rodgers produced his first CD, *Blues Is My Wailing Wall*, which is currently being released by Blue Thumb Records and Universal Studios. The recording contains a cross-section of classical blues and more contemporary pieces with Rodgers' own original and insightful lyrics, placing the history of blues in social, cultural, and historical context. A unique feature of his work is Rodgers' reflection not only on the music itself, but also on key social and political events surrounding its evolution.

The spring symposium, to be held in May, will address issues of multiculturalism, migration, and identity formation in global contexts, with an emphasis on technology and social change and on the different culture, art, and music of border crossings. The symposium will bring together a prominent group of performers and interdisciplinary scholars who will examine the myths and cultural practices involved in border crossings, displacements, and rearticulations. From migration to tourism, from the circuits of world art and music to grass-roots religion and politics, the participants will explore the border's multiple dimensions.

As part of the year's activities, AAASRP and the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Diego will sponsor a Blues-and Border Music Essay Contest for K-12 students. Entries are due no later than March 31, 2000, and must have a musical theme. For more information about the contest rules, contact (619) 298-3520.

AAASRP's mission is to promote research and intellectual understanding of the issues that face African-Americans and the African diaspora populations today from the perspectives of the arts, humanities, and the social sciences. The project sponsors public events and other outreach activities that bring together diverse groups of people, both to foster a comparative and interdisciplinary environment and to share information and exchange scholarly ideas on these topics. Last year, AAASRP sponsored a series of events focusing on the Black West, including a Black Western film festival. For more information about this year's programs call (858) 534-4790.

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