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March 3, 2008

For immediate release

The University of Northern Colorado presents ...

A CLASSICAL CAJUN GUMBO

*A pops event featuring Cajun fiddler **DOUG KERSHAW**, *The Ragin' Cajun*, and the award-winning UNC Symphony Orchestra*

Saturday, April 5, 2008 at 8 p.m.
Union Colony Civic Center
Monfort Concert Hall
701 10th Ave.
Greeley, Colo.

Tickets / Info: 970-351-2200
www.arts.unco.edu/news/gumbo
970-356-5000 / 800-315-ARTS
www.UCSTARS.com

The University of Northern Colorado is proud to present *A Classical Cajun Gumbo*, a pops event featuring Cajun fiddler DOUG KERSHAW and the UNC Symphony Orchestra in concert on April 5th at the Union Colony Civic Center in Greeley.

Kershaw, known to his fans worldwide as “The Ragin’ Cajun,” is considered to be the king of fiddlers. Many of his peers have said he is the best musician, performer and singer/songwriter to come out of his native southwest Louisiana.

Kershaw’s performance with the UNC Symphony marks his first foray into classical music. This groundbreaking concert features Kershaw’s original music, newly arranged for full orchestra by UNC School of Music faculty members. A first for both Kershaw and the nationally acclaimed orchestra, the show will combine the unique ingredients of a rich orchestral sound with the hot licks and energy of Kershaw’s amazing fiddling. Mix in some horns, winds and percussion and a five-piece Cajun band, and you have a recipe for *A Classical Cajun Gumbo!*

Kershaw’s friendship with UNC violin professor Dr. Richard Fuchs led to this unique collaboration. Fuchs is teaching Kershaw how to read and write music; in return, Kershaw is working with UNC students and other interested players on various musical projects.

Proceeds from the concert will benefit the 25th anniversary of the Western States Honors Orchestra Festival (WSHOF) held in November at the University of Northern Colorado. This annual “weekend for strings” brings advanced high school musicians from Colorado and surrounding Western states to UNC for intense training with UNC faculty and some of the nation’s leading orchestral performers.

The concert will take place at 8 p.m., Saturday, April 5, at the Union Colony Civic Center, Monfort Concert Hall, 701 10th Avenue, in downtown Greeley, Colo. Tickets rang fromm \$32-\$15. Student discounts are available. For additional event information, call the UNC performing arts box office at 970-351-2200.

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background information attached

Information available online at www.arts.unco.edu/news/gumbo.html. A video clip with information about the event is located on that web page. The clip can also be accessed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=rntgUwH3j9U.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Doug Kershaw, as well as project coordinators Richard Fuchs and Russell Guyver, would be pleased to discuss this project with you. Contact Susan Nelson, UNC Community Arts Office, at 970-351-1921 or susan.nelson@unco.edu to arrange interviews or personal appearances.

The University of Northern Colorado Orchestra program draws upon a rich and well-founded tradition of excellence. Under the guidance of its music director, Dr. Russell Guyver, the UNC Symphony Orchestra has received national and international recognition. The group has been awarded “Best U.S. College Orchestra” in *DownBeat* Magazine’s Annual Student Music Awards in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007. The orchestra represented the U.S. in The International Cycle of University Orchestras in Zaragoza, Spain, in 2003 and 2006.

The son of an alligator hunter, **Doug Kershaw** grew up on a houseboat working the marshes south of Tiel Ridge, an island located three miles off the coast of Louisiana. His family and other Cajun families met on Saturday nights for a “*fais do do*,” an evening of music and storytelling, with lots of dancing, drinking and gambling. As a child, Kershaw was sent to the “kids room” during these events, but instead of playing with the other children, he spent his time at the door, listening to the music and watching the grownups unwind. Kershaw’s father kept a fiddle on the boat and had made it clear to his children that they were not to touch it. As a five-year-old, however, Kershaw couldn’t resist. He pushed and climbed his way to the top of the closet, took down the fiddle and taught himself to how to play it. His “secret” was discovered after he dropped the violin. His father said he had to play it or suffer the consequences for breaking his instrument. Kershaw played three songs for his father: two traditional tunes and one he made up on the spot. His career as a Cajun fiddler and storyteller was launched that day.

By age 9, the young performer had turned pro. He and his brothers formed a band and quickly earned a reputation for their high-energy performances of Cajun two-steps and country ballads. They recorded their first single, “So Lovely, Baby,” in 1955. The tune became a Top 5 Country hit in August 1955. Soon after, they were invited to join the cast of Louisiana Hayride, a popular radio show broadcast from the northern Louisiana town of Shreveport. Their success led to the boys joining the cast of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tenn., a year later.

After a hitch in the Army, Kershaw and his brothers recorded “Louisiana Man,” a song Kershaw wrote. Now considered his signature tune, “Louisiana Man” has been covered by more than 800 artists.

Kershaw has been captivating audiences worldwide for more than 60 years. When talking about who he has worked with, it is often easier to name who he has not yet collaborated

with: Kershaw is truly a living legend. Over the course of his career he has appeared on television with Johnny Cash, Ed Sullivan, Johnny Carson, Mike Douglas, Merv Griffin, Dinah Shore, John Wayne, Wolf-Man Jack, and Mary Tyler Moore. He has performed as part of “Fiddlers Three” with Itzhak Perlman and Jean-Luc Ponty. He wrote and recorded the title song for the movie “Heaven’s Gate,” and he had acting roles in the movies *Zechariah*, *Days of Heaven* and *Medicine Ball Caravan*.

Kershaw was instrumental in launching the careers of many of today’s top entertainers, in particular Jay Leno, Dolly Parton, Little Richard, Willie Nelson and Steve Martin. Kershaw met them as they were getting started. He liked what he saw, so he booked these “up-and-coming” stars to open for him. Some of established “big name” celebrities he’s worked with include Eric Clapton, Johnny Cash and Hank Williams, Jr.

Kershaw’s friendship with UNC violin professor Dr. Richard Fuchs led to this unique collaboration. Fuchs is teaching Kershaw how to read and write music; in return, Kershaw is working with UNC students and other interested players on various musical projects. Fuchs and a team of UNC musicians are helping Kershaw make orchestral arrangements of his original work. Kershaw hopes to travel with his band and present his music with other orchestras around the country in the future. Sheet music will be available through the UNC Jazz Press.

A documentary of Kershaw’s experiences with the UNC Symphony is currently in production. Major performers and UNC musicians will be featured in the movie. Filmmakers hope to air the finished program on PBS or an arts-focused cable network.

Sound bites and video footage are available on request.
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