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WCU's literary festival promises raft of talented wordsmiths

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From written word to silver screen, Western Carolina University's Spring Literary Festival will celebrate its 10th year by featuring two authors whose works have been tagged for the silver screen.

Novelist and poet Ray Rash will kick off the festival, and memoirist Nick Flynn will deliver the keynote speech. Both have books that are or have been turned into feature length films.

Rash, WCU's Parris Distinguished Professor of Appalachian Culture, will participate in a question-and-answer session with audience members beginning at 8 p.m. on March 20 in the University Center theater.

A film adaptation of Rash's *Serena*, a 2008 novel about the ambitious wife of a timber baron set in Depression-era Western North Carolina, is set for release in 2014. Rash's newest novel *The Cove* will be published in April.

Nick Flynn will close the festival with a reading at 7:30 p.m., March 22, in the recital hall of the Coulter Building. Flynn's 2004 memoir recounts the author's encounter with his long-absent father while working in a Boston homeless shelter. The work was adapted and recently released as the feature film "Being Flynn," directed by Paul Weitz and starring Robert De Niro, Paul Dano and Julianne Moore. Flynn authored a second memoir *The Ticking Is the Bomb*, which was published in 2010, and a companion collection of poems in 2011.

All events are in the A.K. Hinds University Center or the recital hall of the Coulter Building on the WCU campus. Events are free and open to the public, and authors will sign works after each reading.

This year's festival also includes a performance of "The Becky Show," a multimedia exploration of a "white trash childhood" by Rebecca Hardin-Thrift, at noon on March 22 in Illusions in the University Center. Hardin-Thrift writes short stories and poetry.

Other featured authors this year are Mary Adams, Catherine Carter and Deidre Elliott, all of WCU's Department of English; and Shirlette Ammons, Darnell Arnoult, Joseph Bathanti, Stefan Merrill Block, David Joy, Jon Pineda and Glenis Redmond.

WCU's Spring Literary Festival has a long tradition of bringing established and emerging literary talent to Western North Carolina. Again this year, festival organizers donated copies of works by

featured authors to the public libraries in Sylva, Franklin, Bryson City and Highlands.

More information about the festival is available by calling 828.227.7264 or emailing info@litfestival.org. Visit the festival website at www.litfestival.org.

RON RASH

Ron Rash is the author of the 2009 PEN/Faulkner finalist and New York Times best-selling novel *Serena*, in addition to three other prizewinning novels: *One Foot in Eden*, *Saints at the River* and *The World Made Straight*. Rash has also written four collections of poems and four collections of stories, among them *Burning Bright*, which won the 2010 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, and *Chemistry and Other Stories*, which was a finalist for the 2007 PEN/Faulkner Award. His newest novel *The Cove* will be published in April.

MARY ADAMS

Mary Adams is a child of the snow-and-steel belt, and she writes poetry and rescues dogs in Sylva. Her books include *Epistles from the Planet Photosynthesis* and *Commandment*. She teaches Shakespeare and biblical literature. Her poems have appeared in *Western Humanities Review*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Shenandoah*, *North American Review* and *Gulf Coast*, among others. Her honors include a Michener grant and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

www.maryadams.net.

SHIRLETTE AMMONS

Shirlette Ammons is a poet, writer, musician and coordinator of an arts program for children. She is also a Cave Canem Fellow. Her second collection of poetry, entitled *Matching Skin*, was published by Carolina Wren Press in 2008 and features an introduction by Nikky Finney, 2011 National Book Award Winner for Poetry. Ammons' first collection of poetry, titled *Stumphole: Aunthology of Bakwoods Blood* was published in 2002. She is vocalist songwriter for hip-hop rock band *Mosadi Music*.

DARNELL ARNOULT

Darnell Arnoult is writer-in-residence and assistant professor of English at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tenn. Author of the prizewinning collection *What Travels With Us: Poems* and the novel *Sufficient Grace*, she is a regular faculty member of the Table Rock Writers Workshop, Tennessee Young Writers Workshop, John C. Campbell Folk School, Learning Events and the Appalachian Writers Workshop. Arnoult has received the Weatherford Award for Appalachian Literature, SIBA Poetry Book of the Year and in 2007 was named Tennessee Writer of the Year.

www.darnellarnoult.com/wp.

JOSEPH BATHANTI

Joseph Bathanti, a native of Pittsburgh, is professor of creative writing at Appalachian State University in Boone, where he also is the writer-in-residence for the university's Watauga Global Community. He was named the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet for the Western Region for the North Carolina Poetry Society for 2011-12. Bathanti is the author of six books of poetry, including *This Metal*, which was nominated for the National Book Award. Bathanti is also the author of the novels *East Liberty*, winner of the Carolina Novel Award, and *Coventry*, winner of the 2006 Novello Literary Award.

STEFAN MERRILL BLOCK

Born in 1982, Stefan Merrill Block grew up in Plano, Texas. His first book, *The Story of Forgetting*, was an international bestseller and the winner of Best First Fiction at the Rome International Festival of Literature, the 2008 Merck Serono Literature Prize and the 2009 Fiction Award from the Writers' League of Texas. Following the publication of his second novel, *The Storm at the Door*, Block was awarded the University of Texas Dobie Paisano Fellowship and a fellowship at the Santa Maddalena Foundation in Italy. He currently lives in Brooklyn.

CATHERINE CARTER

Born on the eastern shore of Maryland and raised there by wolves and vultures, Catherine Carter now lives in Cullowhee with her husband. She teaches at Western Carolina University, where she coordinates the English education program. Her first full-length collection, *The Memory of Gills*, received the 2007 Roanoke-Chowan Award from the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association; her poem "Toast" won the 2009 North Carolina Writers' Network Randall Jarrell award. Her new book is *The Swamp Monster at Home*.

DEIDRE ELLIOTT

Raised in the Great Plains, Deidre Elliott's creative nonfiction appears in numerous journals as well as in the anthologies *Getting Over the Color Green: Contemporary Environmental Literature of the Southwest* and *Hell's Half-Mile: River Runners' Tales of Hilarity and Misadventure*. Her fiction appears in the anthology *Cold Flashes: Literary Snapshots of Alaska*. She has recently completed a collection of essays, *Dry Eden: A Desert Commonplace Book*. Currently, she coordinates the Professional Writing Program and teaches in English at Western Carolina University.

NICK FLYNN

Nick Flynn's most recent book is *The Captain Asks for a Show of Hands*, a collection of poems linked to his latest memoir *The Ticking Is the Bomb*, which the Los Angeles Times calls a "disquieting masterpiece." His previous memoir, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*, was

shortlisted for France's Prix Femina. The book was transformed into a film "Being Flynn" starring Robert De Niro, Paul Dano and Julianne Moore. He is credited as an executive producer and artistic collaborator for the movie. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Library of Congress and is a professor in the creative writing program at the University of Houston.

GLENIS REDMOND

Glenis Redmond is a widely published and award-winning poet from Greenville, S.C. Her latest book of poems is *Under the Sun*. Her poems have appeared in *Meridians*, *Heartstone*, *Black Arts Quarterly*, *Obsidian II: Black Literature in Review*, *Emrys Journal*, *Bum Rush the Page: Def Poetry Jam*, *Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry* and *Femspec*. She is a recipient of the Denny C. Plattner Award for Outstanding Poetry, is a Kennedy Center Teaching Artist, a North Carolina Arts Council Literary Fellow, a Cave Canem Fellow and a Hermitage Fellow.

JON PINEDA

Jon Pineda is the author of the memoir *Sleep in Me*, a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection and a Library Journal Best Books of 2010 selection. He is also the author of the poetry collections *The Translator's Diary*, winner of the 2007 Green Rose Prize, and *Birthmark*, selected by Ralph Burns as winner of the 2003 Crab Orchard Award Series in Poetry Open Competition. He currently teaches creative writing at Queens University of Charlotte.

DAVID JOY

David Joy grew up in Charlotte and earned a bachelor of arts in 2007 and a master's degree in professional writing in 2009, both from Western Carolina University. His first book *Growing Gills: A Fly Fisherman's Journey* was published in 2011 and was a finalist for the SELC Reed Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern Environment. Critics called the book "a classic to which readers will keep returning." His creative nonfiction has appeared in *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *The Wilderness House Literary Review* and *Smoky Mountain Living*. He currently lives in Greenville, where he works as a staff writer and columnist for *Crossroads Chronicle*.

REBECCA HARDIN-THRIFT

Rebecca Hardin-Thrift is originally from Belmont. In 2002, she wrote and performed her one-woman show "The Becky Show" in Northampton, Mass., and at the New York International Fringe Festival. Hardin-Thrift is an associate professor of English at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Miss., where she teaches creative writing and drama. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in *Washington Square*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Karamu* and others.

Schedule of Events

SUNDAY, MARCH 18

7:30 p.m.: Poet Glenis Redmond

(UC theater)

MONDAY, MARCH 19

12 p.m.: Gilbert Chappell

Distinguished Poetry Reading (student

poets) featuring distinguished poet

Joseph Bathanti (UC theater)

4 p.m.: Memoirist and poet Jon Pineda (UC theater)

7:30 p.m.: Novelist Stefan Merrill Block (UC theater)

TUESDAY, MARCH 20

1 p.m.: Screening of "Being Flynn"

(UC theater)

4 p.m.: Poets Catherine Carter and

Mary Adams (UC theater)

8 p.m.: Novelist Ron Rash in an

emceed audience Q&A with Rob

Neufeld of the Asheville Citizen-Times

(UC theater)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21

4 p.m.: Fiction writer Darnell Arnoult

(UC theater)

7:30 p.m.: Creative nonfiction writers

Deidre Elliott and David Joy

(UC theater)

THURSDAY, MARCH 22

12 p.m.: Rebecca Hardin-Thrift's

The Becky Show'(UC Illusions)

4 p.m.: Poet Shirlette Ammons

(recital hall, Coulter Building)

7:30 p.m.: Memoirist Nick Flynn

(recital hall, Coulter Building)

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