

Press Release

What: Theatrical performance – *A Life of Sorrow, the Life and Times of Carter Stanley*

When: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 @ 1:00 pm

Where: Buchanan County Public Library, 1185 Poe Town St., Grundy, VA 24614

Additional info: 276-935-5721 * <https://bcplnet.org/>

Cost: FREE

The Buchanan County Public in Grundy, Virginia, is presenting a performance of the one-man show called *A Life of Sorrow, the Life and Times of Carter Stanley* on September 7, 2022, at 1:00 pm. The performance coincides with the 75th anniversary of Stanley Music in America (1946-2021)! The program uses a mix of storytelling and music to bring to life the saga of an Appalachian Mountain Music Treasure.

For the uninitiated, Carter Stanley was an expressive singer and songwriter. As the front man for the legendary Stanley Brothers duo, he spent the best 20 years of his life pounding the pavement to take his gift to anyone who would listen. By 1966, he was tired. But... he had a story to tell!

Raised in the coalfields of Appalachia during the hardscrabble days of the Great Depression, the bright lights of a country stage raised the hairs on the back of a 10-year-old's neck! He had found his calling! A decade later, his musical expression of choice was a new phenomenon known to many as the high lonesome sound... what would come to be known the world over as bluegrass. Tormented by a parent's adolescent rejection and frustrated by the lack of commercial success -- still he held to his dream. He played the music, he wrote the songs, and ultimately... he self-destructed. *A Life of Sorrow* is the story of one man's musical journey. From the Clinch Mountains of Virginia, around the world, and back home again.

A Life of Sorrow is the creation of Roanoke, Virginia, actor Gary Reid. A bluegrass enthusiast and historian for over 45 years, he is regarded as the foremost authority on the music of the Stanley Brothers. In 2009, Reid conceived the idea of putting together a one-man show about Carter Stanley. To that end, he took two semesters of acting at Virginia Western Community College and has since appeared in more than 70 productions and events at regional community theatres as an actor, producer, and stage manager and has appeared in several short films and commercials. He was the second-place finalist at the 2015 Sounds of the Mountains storytelling competition in Fincastle, Virginia.

Launched on September 10, 2014, *A Life of Sorrow* has enjoyed over 100 performances at theaters, festivals, libraries, and museums in seventeen different states as well as three Canadian provinces. The program is partially funded by a grant from the IBMA Foundation, a non-profit offshoot of the International Bluegrass Music Association that supports programs and initiatives that foster the growth of bluegrass music. Special thanks also go to Showtimers Community Theatre of Roanoke, Virginia.

In addition to his theatrical endeavors, Reid is also a published author. After many years of research, his book *The Music of the Stanley Brothers* is now available! It traces Carter and Ralph Stanley's prolific 20-year recording history. Also noteworthy is Reid's work with Fred Bartenstein on *The Bluegrass Hall of Fame Inductee Biographies* book which earned a 2015 ARSC Award for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research. For his work on both publications, Reid was the 2015 recipient for the International Bluegrass Music Association's Print/Media Person of the Year award.

As a long-time fan of the music of Carter and Ralph Stanley, Reid has spent years collecting memorabilia of the brothers and has all of their single and album releases as well as some 80 hours of live recordings and close to 500 photos. But, he says, "Can you ever have too much?" Reid enjoys meeting and talking with fans who knew or saw the Stanley Brothers in years gone by, and encourages them to bring photos to the show and share.

"This was extraordinary. This far exceeded my expectations. I thought that it would be a tribute to Carter Stanley, which indeed it was, but I didn't realize that it would be so full of emotion and heartfelt sentiment." Bruce Cohen, host of the Singer's Glen house concert, Silver Spring, Maryland

"... [an] enlightening and good exploration into the Stanley Brothers' career. It was a more personal narrative than I expected and I found that intriguing." Dudley Connell, Seldom Scene, Gaithersburg, Maryland

"Your program, A Life of Sorrow based on Carter Stanley, was an incredible performance that brought history to life for the packed crowd in our museum. Your talents allowed our audience to learn about this influential performer, and his time, in a way that museum exhibits cannot communicate. It was a wonderful experience that I would recommend to any venue that wants to engage visitors in an entertaining and engaging way." Ernest Dollar, Director, City of Raleigh Museum, Raleigh, North Carolina

"You did a great job and we appreciate your hard work." Roddy Moore, Director, Blue Ridge Institute & Museum, Ferrum, Virginia

"Mr. Reid has created a professional, well-paced show that our library patrons found to be very moving, in addition to being entertaining and educational. Mr. Reid has a rare gift for making his subject come alive when he is performing. I would highly recommend Gary Reid's 'A Life of Sorrow' to other libraries and organizations who are looking for popular, high quality programs to offer to their communities." Jim Patrick, Information Services librarian, Yuma County Library District, Yuma, Arizona

"Our Meeting Room only seats about 100 people and we were at capacity with Gary's well-attended program. The audience was engaged when Gary took the stage. Everyone had fun." Dorey Conway, Foothills Branch Manager, Yuma, Arizona

"My daughter and I attended your performance in Wheeling, WV on Tuesday night and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We both read Ralph's memoir... The opportunity to consider Carter's perspective and even hear some of the same stories as he might view them was enjoyable. My daughter (17) said that at jam sessions people will throw in one of Carter's songs and she never really appreciated them... but she considered them worthy of another look after your performance. I think that is a tribute to your work: inspiring the next generation to relate to and appreciate Carter's life and music. Thank you for a great performance." Richard S., Wheeling, West Virginia

"Lovely job!" Eugene Wolf, Actor/Director at Virginia's Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia
"[A] heartfelt performance before an enrapt audience had moments of both humor and sadness as he eloquently painted a picture of this young musician's life and his struggles." Darlene Smithwick, Adult Services Coordinator, Roanoke County Library, Roanoke, Virginia

"I highly recommend Gary Reid's theatrical performance of 'A Life of Sorrow: the Life and Times of Carter Stanley.' Our audience was totally captivated by his poignant performance. He is highly professional and a pleasure to deal with. We have added him to our repeat performance list."
Lora A Glass, Adult Services Manager, Niceville Public Library, Niceville, Florida

"Having read the programming surveys, I can assure you that your performance was enthusiastically received by our discerning audience members. The Friends of the Port Orange Regional Library and I thank you again for a stirring performance." Cyndy Moore, Programming Librarian, Port Orange Regional Library, Port Orange, Florida

"The show was a draw for fans of The Stanley Brothers, as well as Appalachian music and culture in general. Mr. Reid's expertise and talents are showcased in his performance and were accompanied by professionalism, displayed in all aspects of planning and execution of the show at The Lincoln."
Kristin W. Untiedt-Barnett, Executive Director, Lincoln Theatre, Marion, Virginia

"Mr. Gary Reid portrays Carter Stanley with sincerity and knowledge and is totally ensconced in this persona. [We] are transported back to the Appalachian homestead to relive the major events in the life of Carter and his brother Ralph as they struggled with heartache and triumph." Julie Mike, Outreach/Adult Services Manager, Marion County Public Library System, Fairmont, West Virginia

"I really enjoyed your performance at the Fairmont Library. It was very informative and entertaining. Good Job." Ernie T., Fairmont, West Virginia

"You really inhabit the character... no false, 'theatrical,' distractions. The strength of the show -- and it does have plenty -- is in its intimate, non-theatricality. Really, well done!" Bruce Nemerov, contributor to NPR's All Things Considered, Asheville, North Carolina

"Gary Reid's 'A Life of Sorrow - the Life and Times of Carter Stanley' performance was spectacular! Our patrons were absolutely thrilled with his performance. I highly recommend this program to anyone with an interest in traditional southern Appalachian culture and music." Darren Smith, Reference Librarian, Watauga County Public Library, Boone, North Carolina

"Gary, wonderful show last night! You really seemed to embody Carter, plus I loved the [Bill] Monroe bit." Thomas Goldsmith, Raleigh News-Observer, Raleigh, North Carolina

“Really appreciate your bringing your excellent concert way out to Arizona. You truly embody the spirit and personification of Mr. Carter Stanley... truly great program.” Charlie C., Mesa, Arizona