

COLLOQUIUM BY STEVEN TRACY

“I CAN HEAR YOU BREATHING”: BLUES, JAZZ, AND INSPIRATION

TIME: 5:00-6:00 PM, WEDNESDAY, 12 DEC 2018

VENUE: ACADEMIC BUILDING 1079

“I Can Hear You Breathing”: Blues, Jazz, and Inspiration

Speaker: Steven Tracy, Distinguished University Professor of Afro-American Studies at UMass Amherst



**Prof Tracy will play the harmonica to demonstrate the vibrancy and complexity of the blues, and tell us about the art of improvisation in the world of jazz.*

ABSTRACT:

In this talk, Steve Tracy will discuss how playing blues, jazz, and gospel harmonica reflects a distinct method of approaching the instrument that is in the West African tradition of playing.

Through discussions of performances of "Amazing Grace," "Train Imitation," and "John Henry," as well as his recording of "Turkey in the Straw" with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, he will highlight the techniques of playing that he uses and the meaning behind those techniques. He will extend his discussion to the employment of musical techniques in literature, emphasizing the major importance of the music in American culture.

BIO:

Steven C. Tracy is Distinguished University Professor of Afro-American Studies at UMass Amherst. Tracy, who has written, edited, co-edited, or provided introductions for 30 books, is author of *Langston Hughes and the Blues* (U of Illinois Press 1988), *Going to Cincinnati: A History of the Blues in the Queen City* (U of Illinois P, 1993), *A Brush with the Blues* (1997), and *Hot Music, Ragmentation, and the Bluing of American Literature* (University of Alabama Press, 2015). His second book, *Going to Cincinnati*, was awarded the ARSC Award for a work on jazz, blues, or gospel music. He has also been named as a prestigious Chu Tian Scholar (the most prestigious scholarly award in Hubei Province, China) at Central China Normal University, where he has taught, lectured and performed two months a year for five years under the auspices of the Chinese government. Most recently, he has travelled many times to China to give keynote addresses and a series of over 70 lectures on American and African American literature and music at a wide selection of Chinese universities.

A singer and harmonica player, Tracy has recorded with his own band, Pigmeat Jarrett, Big Joe Duskin, and Albert Washington, and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and opened for B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Albert King, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, James Cotton, Canned Heat, Johnny Winter, and many others. While a senior at Walnut Hills High School, Steve won a national harmonica championship for ages 13-18 that put him as a guest on the Johnny Carson Tonight Show, initiating his career as a performer. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Greater Cincinnati Blues Society along with his friend Albert Washington the year he left Cincinnati for Massachusetts.

This event is open to all. For any queries email yg73@duke.edu or call 3665 7149.