

20th Anniversary Season

Performing Arts Series

presents

American Voices

Songs of Our Nation

**Larry Gatlin
Crystal Gayle
Andy Cooney**

Saturday, September 11, 2010
Yardley Hall
Johnson County Community College

American Voices, *Songs of our Nation*

Program

Presenting the Colors of the Flag Overland Park Fire Department

A moment of silence to reflect upon the Americans affected by 9-11-2001

Gatlin, Gayle and Cooney join together in presenting an evening of entertainment and energy as they celebrate country, heritage, faith and friendship.

The songs presented this evening will be announced from the stage.

There will be a 20-minute Intermission

Bios

Larry Gatlin led the Gatlin Brothers through their four-decade career singing, harmonizing and writing their way to win a Grammy and even an invitation to the White House. After touring with his brothers, Larry starred on Broadway and on the big screen. Combining his love of music and theater, Gatlin has recently scored an entire musical using only his songs, both old and new.

Larry is best-known for his '80s hits with the Gatlin Brothers, but prior to forming and leading that family trio, he enjoyed a successful solo career with occasional support from his brothers.

Gatlin was born in Seminole, Texas, in 1948 and was raised on country gospel music. He and his brothers, Steve and Rudy, often sang together in church, as well as on local radio and television. Occasionally they recorded for the small gospel label Sword & Shield. After high school, Gatlin enrolled at the University of Houston, where he joined a gospel group called the Imperials.

The Imperials went on to perform in Jimmy Dean's Las Vegas revue, where Gatlin met Dottie West. Impressed by his songwriting, West recorded two of his compositions, "You're the Other Half of Me" and "Once You Were Mine."

Dottie passed his demo tape around Nashville and paid for Larry to relocate there. Gatlin quickly found work as a backup singer for Kris Kristofferson, and soon after, landed a solo deal with Monument in 1973.

Gatlin's debut album, *The Pilgrim*, was produced later that year, included his first charting country single, "Sweet Becky Walker," which inched to the Top 40 during 1974. "Delta Dirt" was his first Top 20 hit, taken from the album *Rain Rainbow*.

Gatlin's brothers first made their presence felt on his third album, the 1976 release titled *Larry Gatlin with Family & Friends*. "Broken Lady" from this album produced his first Top 5 hit.

Sometimes accompanied by his brothers, Gatlin scored three more Top 5 singles in 1977, "I Don't Wanna Cry," "Love Is Just a Game," and "Statues Without Hearts." In 1978 marked his first number one hit, "I Just Wish You Were Someone I Love." When Gatlin left Monument for Columbia in 1979, he began crediting the Gatlin Brothers Band on all of his recordings. That year's number one smash was "All the Gold in California." The group's subsequent releases had several variations on the Gatlin Brothers name, and often billed Larry out front.

The Gatlin Brothers' success continued for much of the '80s, bringing them nine more Top 10 hits and another number one "Houston" (Means I'm One Day Closer to You) in 1983. Their last big hit came in 1987 with the Top 5 "Talkin' to the Moon." Their brand of smooth country-pop was soon eclipsed by the new traditionalist movement. After a commercial decline of several years, the group decided to retire in 1991 and embarked on a successful farewell tour.

Larry starred in the Broadway production of *The Will Rogers Follies*, and in 1993 the group opened their own theater in Branson, Mo. In 1998, Gatlin released the solo gospel album *In My Life*, as well as a book, his memoir titled *All the Gold in California*. The group continued to play shows at their Myrtle Beach, N.C. theater, and 2004 saw the release of *Live at Billy Bob's Texas, Larry Gatlin & the Gatlin Brothers Sing Their Family Gospel Favorites* by Dualtone Records. Gatlin's inspired and ambitious *The Pilgrimage* was released in 2009 by Curb Records.

Crystal Gayle's warm, resonant vocal style and timeless music created a country crossover phenomenon. Her Grammy Award winning hit, "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue," is recognized as one of the 10 most performed country songs of the 20th century. Her many awards, 22 number one hits, and countless concerts and television appearances were topped off in 2009 with the presentation to Crystal of a star on the fabled Hollywood Walk of Fame.

"Before country was 'cool,' Crystal was 'class'..."

Never has one reviewer captured a platinum-clad, Grammy Award-winning career so beautifully in so few words. Crystal encapsulates everything the dazzling qualities of her name imply—although that name came to her in quite an unusual fashion. Crystal was born Brenda Gayle Webb, and when Crystal began her recording career, her older sister, Loretta Lynn, suggested that Brenda Gayle could be confusing with the already known and successful recording artist Brenda Lee. So Loretta suggested her younger sibling adopt the name 'Crystal' when she began recording, thus her new name became Crystal Gayle.

Once re-named, her musical boundaries have since been seemingly limitless, as proven by her latest much anticipated project *All My Tomorrows*, a mood influenced collection of American standards. Songs such as "Cry Me A River," "Sentimental Journey," "It Had To Be You," and "Smile," somehow reach the heights their songwriters must have dreamed of when piped through the beautiful chords of Crystal Gayle. "These are songs any artist loves to sing," said Crystal in a recent interview. "They've endured to become timeless." Strange

to think of anyone as young and vibrant as the artist in question as a “timeless classic” herself—but that indeed describes the course Crystal Gayle’s career has taken. In the mid ’70s, Crystal was the focal point of her own one hour prime time special on CBS television, a special that earned the glowing praise of viewers and critics alike. Chic, hip and cool with a romantic mane of hair that swept around her ankles, in one evening of television Crystal Gayle moved country music to the highest platform it had yet reached in the eyes of the viewing and listening nation.

The blue-eyed beauty from the Appalachian coal mining town of Paintsville, Kentucky, would never again linger in the shadow of being Loretta’s baby sister. Drop dead beautiful and dressed in designer threads, Crystal took country music to town on her arm in the ’70s and introduced it to mainstream audiences.

The result was a career crossover that still produces beautiful results, such as those captured in the grooves of “All My Tomorrows.”

But in the beginning...

Country, folk, pop, rock ‘n roll, Broadway show tunes, gospel...all found equal place in her heart, growing up as the youngest of eight children. Like sister Loretta, Crystal too was a “coal miner’s daughter” before she was a platinum selling singer and a world-class entertainer. While still in school, she signed her first recording contract. Her debut single, “I’ve Cried The Blue Right Out of My Eyes,” was written by Loretta (already a star) and reached the Top 20 on the national country music charts. Three more singles were released over the next three years, all making an impact with radio stations and their listeners.

What next emerged was uniquely Crystal. Her warm, resonant vocal styling, individual as a fingerprint, captured the imagination and attention of audiences not usually tuned in and turned on by country music. There was an undeniable sophistication and a beguiling charm about her look and her voice that was a memorable imprint on every audience. Her first album project began a roll-out of smash singles. “Wrong Road Again,” (her first of many hit singles with producer Allen Reynolds) was her debut Top 10 record, while “I’ll Get Over You,” was her first number one single. By her fourth album, *We Must Believe in Magic*, Crystal became the first female artist in country music history to achieve platinum album sales. Driving the engine of the album was the song that is her enduring career signature song, “Don’t It Make My Brown Eyes Blue.” “Brown Eyes” opened the world’s eyes to Crystal Gayle. She became a household name in homes, grand and small, from Louisville to Leningrad. The glamour and the mystique of the Crystal Gayle phenomenon made her an instantly in demand artist. From symphony halls to Carnegie Hall...from the best kept stages in Las Vegas to the prestige of the London Palladium... one word – “Crystal” – crossed musical genres and oceans.

Crystal globe-hopped, and was seen in all the best camera lenses. Her CBS prime time special was followed by an equally groundbreaking HBO concert special viewed by millions. She appeared in Bob Hope’s historic NBC-TV special, *On the Road to China*. She was seen hosting the *American Music Awards*, the *Academy of Country Music Awards*, and her third network special, *A Crystal Christmas from Sweden*. She swept through tours—and repeat tours—in the U.S., Japan, England, Canada, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Australia and the Far East.

In the wake, her hit list of platinum and gold record sales was to be matched only by her awards and accolades. CMA's "Female Vocalist of the Year," for two consecutive years, and the Grammy Award winner for "Best Female Vocal Performance," thanks to her beloved "Brown Eyes" – a song that she today admits she has never grown tired of singing. Crystal swept the Academy of Country Music Awards for three of its "Top Female Vocalist" statuettes. As her music and her career path widened to mainstream audiences, so did her accolades. She is the recipient of three American Music Awards – voted by the nation as America's "Favorite Female Artist." Breaking through the unusual genre boundaries faced by most artists has allowed Crystal Gayle a beautiful advantage, doing projects close to her heart—just for the sheer love of the music in question. One of the most meaningful was *Crystal Gayle Sings the Heart and Soul of Hoagy Carmichael*, a stunning, critically acclaimed collection of 15 of the great composer's favorite classics. "One of my personal career highlights was getting to meet and sing with Hoagy on a television special," Crystal recalls. Crystal not only breathed new life into the Carmichael classics, but produced a must-have album of her career that included such immortals as "Stardust," and "Two Sleepy People."

Success swept around her as gracefully as her trademarked long hair. Her inspirational album, *Someday*, was nominated for a Grammy. With the advent of the new millennium, Crystal recorded *In My Arms*, an enduring collection of children's lullabies. The project was an outgrowth of her love for the littlest of listeners, and of her visit to *Sesame Street* to sing with Big Bird to a new generation of music lovers.

Always gracious and generous with her time and talents, Crystal has been awarded the coveted "Celebration of Light" Award in recognition of her myriad humanitarian efforts, among them the Make-a-Wish Foundation (for whom she has recorded the official theme song) and the Arthritis Foundation, for whom she has served as telethon co-host for several years. Fittingly, the "Celebration of Light" Award was a presentation in Waterford crystal.

One of the most fitting honors in her career came in 1999 when "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" was recognized by ASCAP as one being one of the 10 most performed songs of the 20th century.

At home in Nashville when not touring, Crystal continues to make the world a little more beautiful just by her presence. Her upscale boutique Crystal's is one of the city's premiere destinations for the most beautiful gifts and finest jewelry. Her two children, daughter Catherine and son Chris, and her husband Bill Gatzimos are her admitted heartbeat.

Like fine wine...time has been nothing but kind to Crystal Gayle.

Andy Cooney was christened by *The New York Times* as "Irish America's Favorite Son." His outstanding voice and dynamic stage presence make him a favorite with audiences as he renders songs ranging from all-time favorites like "Galway Bay," "Danny Boy," to his hit records "The Irish Wedding Song," "Boston Rose" and "Daughter of Mine."

Andy has sold out Carnegie Hall in New York more than once, just recently in December 2009. Through his music and the words he will perform this evening, Andy will take us on a journey of what America is really about. His talent and versatility enable him to deliver a song directly to the heart of his listeners.

One of nine children born into a deep-rooted Irish-American family from Long Island, N.Y., Andy Cooney has been singing Irish songs from an early age, directed by his Dublin-born grandfather, Andy Feehan. As a young lad, he sang at family and church gatherings. His professional career began at the age of 17, where he entertained audiences with his piano playing and singing in many of the well-known Irish establishments in the New York area. In 1986, at age 19, the well-known Irish bandleader, Paddy Noonan, asked Andy to tour with his show. For the next several years Andy toured, gaining national exposure for his talent and winning a place in the hearts of those who heard him from coast to coast. In 1994, Andy struck out on his own and hasn't looked back.

Today, Andy has gathered around him the finest group of musicians on the Irish music scene touring all over the U.S. throughout the year. For two seasons of the year, Christmas and Saint Patrick's Day, Andy adds to his troupe by inviting other talented entertainers to join him. Some of these performers include Ronan Tynan, Cherish the Ladies, George Casey, Noel V. Ginnity, Annette Griffin and Kate Purcell to name a few. These high-energy performances showcase the finest in Irish music, comedy and dance.

Andy has recorded 15 albums, and takes great pleasure in associating with many of the finest musicians on the Irish recording scene, such as Brian Byrne, the RTE Concert Orchestra, Seamus Brett, Joanie Madden, Seamus Egan, Eileen Ivers and Des Moore. Cooney has also recorded an album with the world-famous Phil Coulter entitled *Home Away From Home*.

As a seasoned stage veteran, Andy really hit the mark with his first Public Television Special, *Andy Cooney Live in Concert: An Evening of Irish Classics*. Filmed at the Renaissance Center in Dickson, Tenn., June 2004, his band of musicians were joined on stage with the renowned Nashville String Machine, and Irish dancers direct from *Lord of the Dance* added a magical touch. This is Andy's first live recording and he performs all his hits: "Galway Shawl," "My Kathleen," "Boston Rose," "Rattlin' Bog," "Daughter of Mine" and "The Irish Wedding Song," to name a few.

Cooney's release in 2008, *It'll Be Me*, is his best yet. Recorded in Ireland with the RTE Concert Orchestra, Andy's true vocal range and ability to deliver these powerful selections put him in a league of his own. *It'll Be Me* features Andy performing a duet with Crystal Gayle. Legendary artist Larry Gatlin wrote the title track and joins Andy and Irish tenor, Ronan Tynan on the track. Seamus Brett produced the CD with incredible orchestral arrangements by Brian Byrne.

In 2009 Andy returned to Ireland to record with the RTE Concert Orchestra an album entitled *The Magic of Christmas*. This album, influenced by his 2008 concert at Carnegie Hall, features traditional Christmas favorites with awesome arrangements by renowned arranger Brian Byrne. Andy's vocal ability on this recording proves that he is on par with any of the great tenors. Andy's 12-year old son Ryan is introduced in his debut recording of "The Little Drummer Boy."

Dubbed "an American gift to Ireland's heritage" (Jim Mahoney, *The Daily News*) Cooney has made his mark not only on the Irish/Irish-American front but also within the world of country music, a natural link since so much of country has Irish roots. Andy has worked with a number of country music's finest, including the Oak Ridge Boys, the Statlers, Larry Gatlin, Charlie Daniels and Crystal Gayle.

The name Andy Cooney has also been associated with *The Cruise of Irish Stars*. Andy put this cruise together in 1995 and every year it has become more and more popular. The 2010 cruise drew over 1000 Irish music fans from Ireland and all over the United States. The cruise features over 20 different Irish bands and performers. Over the years some of Andy's guests have included Noel V. Ginnity, the star of *Doyle's Irish Cabaret*; Tony Kenny, the star of *Jury's Irish Cabaret*; the late Dermot O'Brien; Cherish the Ladies; legendary Irish balladeer Johnny McEvoy; and the great Ronan Tynan.

Andy is a musician, songwriter, vocalist and true entertainer. Quite handsome with a disarming boyish charm, Andy is known to be a true professional bringing the best of Irish entertainment wherever he tours. He maintains a mailing list of over 35,000 fans and his website is visited daily. Andy and his band receive the highest reviews wherever they have performed. Whether playing before a packed theater or at a family gathering, his feelings are the same, "I still feel as though I'm singing for my family... only the room is a little bigger."