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Show brings a bluegrass icon to life

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RALEIGH

A free special event Wednesday harkens back to one of bluegrass music's early performers.

Author Gary Reid is presenting a one-man show portraying foundational figure Carter Stanley, who performed with brother Ralph from 1946 until 1966 as the Stanley Brothers.

It's part of a busy week for Reid, who also is nominated twice (for two separate books) in the International Bluegrass Music Association's print personality of the year

category. His show "A Life of Sorrow - the Life and Times of Carter Stanley," features Reid's portrayal of the singer renowned as one of the field's finest, along with parts of about 10 Stanley Brothers songs.

Known for songs including "Man of Constant Sorrow" and "Angel Band," the Stanley Brothers never achieved the mass popularity of Bill Monroe or Flatt and Scruggs, but still have legions of devoted fans.

"He did so much to lay the foundations of what people refer to as bluegrass today," Reid said of Carter Stanley. "It's my attempt to remind people of his legacy."



SUSAN SAANDHOLLAND

Author Gary Reid portrays bluegrass great Carter Stanley in a one-man show.

While Ralph Stanley is known for his hard-hitting banjo work and lonesome tenor, Carter remains the favorite of some who prefer a mellower, though still soulful, vocal sound.

"He was such an expressive singer," Reid said. "Bill Monroe called him the best natural lead singer he had ever heard. He's a singer's singer of bluegrass."

Launched in 2014, "A Life of Sorrow" has had more than 20 performances in the Stanley Brothers' home turf of southwestern Virginia. It's also had a five-day run at the North Carolina Stage

If you go

What: "A Life of Sorrow - the Life and Times of Carter Stanley"

When: 7 p.m. Wednesday

Where: City of Raleigh Museum, 220 Fayetteville St.

Admission: Free

Company in Asheville and a tour through Ohio, a longtime bluegrass stomping ground.

Carter Stanley's work, still easily available in Stanley Brothers' recordings, merits the tribute, Reid said.

"A lot of people put Carter in the same vein as Hank Williams, as far the singing and the songwriting goes," he said.

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