

# Delta Sources and Resources

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## Creative Writing Readings and Arkansas Roots Music Festival Annual Delta Symposium Arkansas State University Jonesboro, Arkansas by Marcus Charles Tribbett

Held annually in April since 1995 by the Department of English, Philosophy, and World Languages, and originally called the Delta Blues Symposium, Arkansas State University's Delta Symposium has for many years featured creative writing readings by celebrated authors on one of the opening evenings of the symposium, usually a Thursday. For the past several years, these events have been held in the beautiful environs of the Bradbury Art Museum. The readings are co-sponsored by *Arkansas Review* and often have brought in authors who have appeared in our pages, including most recently, Mary Troy (fiction) and Claude Wilkinson (poetry).

In addition to featuring the invited authors, these readings also include student creative writers from Arkansas State University's Creative Writing program, who are invited to showcase their work and polish their public reading talents. Featured authors also lead creative writing workshops for students in university classes the day following the public readings.

The annual symposia are organized around broad topics. Last year's theme (2022) was "Commemoration and Reunion in the South." Delta Symposia themes are chosen by the Delta Symposium Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Gregory Hansen and Dr. Khem Aryal in 2021-22. Themes are selected in the fall before the event, so the theme for 2023 has not yet been unveiled. Ho-

wever, it will be announced on the symposium website soon after it is decided: [www.astate.edu/a/delta-symposium/](http://www.astate.edu/a/delta-symposium/). The dates for 2023 will be March 30 through April 1.

A longtime additional attraction of the annual event has been live music. Originally, performances showcasing well-known blues musicians—such as CeDell Davis and Bobby Rush—were held on Friday evenings. In recent years, though, these one-off concerts have grown to include multiple acts and take place across an entire afternoon (held outdoors at City Water and Light Park if weather permits, indoors in one of the university's many performance venues, such as the Fowler Center Auditorium, if not). The link to the blues is still present—acts in the past decade have included John Hammond Jr., Marcus "Mookie" Cartwright, and the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band (led by Sharde Thomas)—but the festival has also grown to include delta roots and folk music more broadly defined. The Delta Symposium's Arkansas Roots Music Festival is made possible with support from KASU 91.9 FM and the West End Neighborhood Association.

Both the Creative Writing Readings and the Arkansas Roots Music Festival, which occurs at the close of the symposium on Saturday afternoon, are free and open to the public. For more information contact Dr. Gregory Hansen ([ghansen@astate.edu](mailto:ghansen@astate.edu)) or Dr. Khem Aryal ([karyal@astate.edu](mailto:karyal@astate.edu)). ▲▼▲

General Editor's note: All photographs in this article are taken by and courtesy of Richard A. Burns, Professor Emeritus of Folklore at Arkansas State University, a longtime Delta Symposium organizer, chronicler, and proponent, as well as an editorial committee member of this journal.



Author Mary Troy following her reading at CWR night 2022.



Author Claude Wilkinson (left) following his reading at CWR night 2022, with AR general editor Marcus Tribbett (right).



The Gravel Yard performs at the ARMF 2022 in CWL Park.



Grace Stormont performs at the ARMF 2022 in CWL Park.



United Voices Gospel Choir performs at the ARMF 2022 in CWL Park.