

Coastal Cohorts to Perform March 26 in Wilmington

Wilmington, NC – The Coastal Cohorts will be performing songs and stories from their popular musical *King Mackerel & The Blues Are Running* and the sequel CD *Wild Ponies* during a benefit concert on Saturday, March 26 at the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts in Wilmington.

Concert proceeds will benefit the NC Coastal Federation, a nonprofit environmental organization in Ocean. Tickets are on sale now through Thalian Hall in Wilmington and can be purchased on line at www.thalianhall.org and by phone at 910-632-2285 or 800-523-2820. Tickets are \$28 for Prime Seating; \$24 for Choice Seating; and \$20 for Coastal Federation members. Members must purchase tickets by phone to receive the discount.

The Cohorts' original music celebrates life on the Carolina coast with a combination of ballads and upbeat tunes, flavored by humor and the poetry of the natural world. The band's talented musicians are Jim Wann on guitar, Bland Simpson on piano and Don Dixon on bass and other instruments.

"The Cohorts are thrilled to bring our music to coast lovers across North Carolina," said Simpson, who also serves on the federation's board of directors. "While we're all having a good time, we'll be helping out the Coastal Federation by raising funds and awareness about the need to conserve our beautiful rivers, sounds and seashore."

Clive Barnes, an arts critic for *The New York Times* and later for *The New York Post*, called the Cohorts "a pure, salt-watered delight," while Mary Cornatzer of Raleigh's *The News & Observer* described *King Mackerel* as "a musical Valentine to coastal life." Cornatzer said that the songs "deal with things anybody who's ever been to the coast can identify with — pier fishing, joy riding on the strand, hurricanes and living on the sound side."

While *Wild Ponies* celebrates the freedom of "ponies on the run" on protected islands in North Carolina, there are odes to Low-Country cooking, boat-building by hand "without any plans," "a Southern Belle in a coastal town" and many more. The CD also includes new versions of *Catfish* and *Farmer Tan* from the Broadway hit *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, which was written and composed by Wann.

The members of the Coastal Cohorts have each been critically acclaimed over the years for their solo work.

Wann's Broadway musical was a Tony and Drama Desk Nominee for Best Musical and Best Music on Broadway, an Olivier Nominee for Best Musical in London and the longest-running musical in Chicago theater history. His latest effort, *The Great Unknown*, was presented at the New York Musical Theatre Festival last October and named Outstanding New Musical by TalkinBroadway.com.

Dixon of the rock band *Arrogance* produced *King Mackerel* and *Wild Ponies*. The celebrated singer-songwriter and record producer's other credits include working with REM, Hootie and the Blowfish, Marti Jones, James McMurtry and The Smithereens. His ninth solo CD is *The Entire Combustible World in One Small Room*. Dixon's newest release is another nod to the Carolina Coast. *Don Dixon Sings the Jeffords Brothers* is a

collection of songs by South Carolina's renowned Beach Music writing team Jack & Billy Jeffords, designed to get you out of your seat and out on the dance floor.

Simpson of the Tony Award-winning Red Clay Ramblers is the Bowman & Gordon Gray Distinguished Term Professor in the creative writing program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has also collaborated on the books *Into the Sound Country* (with his wife Ann Cary Simpson) and, most recently, on *The Coasts of Carolina* (with Scott Taylor), and on the musicals *Diamond Studs* with Wann and *Kudzu* with Jack Herrick and the late Doug Marlette.

Concert proceeds will be used for the federation's restoration projects. The federation is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat preservation and restoration. Since its founding in 1982, the federation has worked with citizens to safeguard the state's coastal rivers, creeks, sounds and beaches and has protected or restored more than 50,000 acres along the state's coast. Its headquarters is in Ocean in Carteret County, between Morehead City and Swansboro, and it has regional offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information about the Coastal Federation visit www.nccoast.org.

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