



Walton Arts Center

# Performance Guide



## Still A River

Roark Bluff, Photo Credit: Tom Kennon

*Celebrate Arkansas history with the award-winning duo, Still on the Hill. Recognized as Ambassadors of the Ozarks in their national and international travels, artists Donna and Kelly Mulhollan enchant audiences with story-songs that document the modest, close-to-the-land life ways that continue throughout the Ozarks. Showcasing a collection of unusual handmade instruments and photo quilts, Still a River teaches about our nation's first historic national river, a treasure in our own backyard, the Buffalo.*

### Ideas for Curriculum Connections

#### Arkansas Learning Standards:

RL.K.2, RL.1.2, RL.2.2, RL.3.2; RL.1.6, RL.2.6, RL.3.6;  
RI.K.3, RI.1.3, RI.2.3, RI.3.3; W.K.8, W.1.8, W.2.8, W.3.8;  
SL.K.1, SL.1.1, SL.2.1, SL.3.1; SL.K.4, SL.1.4, SL.2.4, SL.3.4;  
SK.K.5, SL.1.5, SL.2.5, SL.3.5; L.3.3. Fine Arts Standards  
Music: P.5.K.1, P.5.1.1, P.5.2.1, P.5.3.1; P.6.K.3, P.6.1.3,  
P.6.2.3, P.6.3.3; R.7.K.3, R.7.1.3, R.7.2.3, R.7.3.3; CN.11.K.1,  
CN.11.1.1, CN.11.2.1, CN.11.3.1; CN.11.K.2, CN.11.1.2,  
CN.11.2.2, CN.11.3.2; P.6.MA.2; R.9.MA.1.



Photo Credit: Still on the Hill

## The Artists

Donna & Kelly Mulhollan, known as Toucan Jam and Still on the Hill, live in Fayetteville. Different than most singer-songwriters, this duo utilizes a host of traditional instruments – including mandolin, banjo, fiddle, guitar, harmonica as well as other unique “found” or handmade instruments like a mule’s jaw bone, the musical saw, washboard and tenor uke – to create musical color, texture and rhythm. They study the Ozark roots music of bluegrass, folk and mountain music and share traditional songs with audiences throughout the state and region. These songs compel people to stop and listen, to pause in their busy lives and think about the resourceful people of the Ozarks in a way that is engaging and relevant.

Still on the Hill has proved itself a favorite at many prestigious festivals and venues here and abroad. Their fans in the Ozarks have voted them the “Best Folk Band” for several years running, and Fayetteville’s mayor proclaimed Dec. 20th “Still on the Hill Day” to honor their community service. The pair has produced nine CDs and continues creating and performing new shows that deepen awareness of and honor the people of the Ozarks. Their songs shine a light on the importance of preserving the natural habitats of the Ozark Region.

## The Performance

*Still A River* is a celebration of the Buffalo National River and many of the songs were inspired by the stories and images in Ken Smith’s book *The Buffalo River Country*.

Donna and Kelly hope that by telling the legends and history of the river in song, a sense of stewardship and desire to protect it from harm will be nurtured so that future generations may enjoy it. *Still A River* is full of music, biography and audience participation. The lyrics of the original songs overflow with stories of unique Ozark people, historic sites along the Buffalo River and the wildlife that calls this area home. Through the use of singing and playing, students are introduced to the traditional music of the Ozarks and asked to imagine that they are in the rural Arkansas settings that produced group songs, harmonies and musical accents.

## The Buffalo National River

The Buffalo National River became the first national river in the United States in 1972 and is one of the few remaining free-flowing rivers in the lower forty-eight states. Originating in the Boston Mountains, it runs generally from west to east before flowing into the White River just inside Baxter County. It was an attraction for the area’s earliest inhabitants with many of their cultural sites such as terrace villages and bluff shelters located in the park today. Indian groups included the Osage, Cherokee, and Shawnee, of which the Cherokee had the greatest impact on the area. Also part of the park is Fritton Cave, the longest known cave in Arkansas. The Buffalo River is the most reliable place to view elk in Arkansas and bird and plant populations are varied and extensive and represent a healthy ecological system.

# Learning Activities

## Folk Music in Arkansas

Folk music has a long tradition in Arkansas. Folk songs are often shared from person to person for generations before being written down. Folk song collectors play an important part preserving traditional music. Handmade instruments are valued in folk music. Families pass their craft and skills along to other family or community members. Think of songs you remember your family singing then write or speak the lyrics.

The lyrics in the song, *Granny Henderson*, pay tribute to Eva “Granny” Henderson, a hardy Ozarker who homesteaded 160 acres of land near Sneed Creek for 80 years. The story about Granny Henderson is told from her point of view, and describes her daily routine, her surroundings along Sneed Creek and her attachment to the place she has called home most of her life. When we hear the song we can imagine the character more fully because of the information implied in the lyrics.

## Granny Henderson

Folks call me Granny Henderson  
Every stranger is my friend  
These hills and hollers gave me life  
I've been a mother... been a wife  
Sneed Creek has been my home  
Never have I cared to roam  
Wait till I'm gone  
Then let the river roll on  
When I'm gone  
Let the river roll on

Words and music by Still on the Hill



Granny Henderson and dog Bobbie,  
Photo Credit: Bob Linder

## Write About

Ask the students to write a short biography about one of the oldest members of their family. Interview the person. Learn more about the facts of the person's life. Write a short biography of the person using the language and images shared by the person. Start with simple questions and ask your own to help you learn more.

- When and where were you born?
- What do you remember about your home and family?
- What interested you about your town, region or country?
- What are the sounds you remember growing up?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What is one of your favorite things?
- What do you feel most proud of?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your loved ones?

## Timeline of the Buffalo National River

According to legends, the Buffalo was sacred to the Native Americans who settled the land along 132 miles of the mighty river until 1828. The river may have been named after the great animal.

By 1900 – logging and mining industries brought thousands of pioneers into the river valley.

1938 – Buffalo River State Park was established and developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1939

1961 – Arkansas leaders like Sen. J. William Fulbright and Dr. Neil Compton worked to conserve and preserve the natural beauty and resources of the Buffalo River and include it in the National Park Service.

1972 – After a decade of hearings and studies, Congress approved Public Law 92-237 and the Buffalo river became America's first national river.



Photo credit: [buffaloriver.org](http://buffaloriver.org)

### Reflect and Assess

Ask the following questions. Record the group's answers on the board and discuss.

- What did you notice about *Still A River*?
- What do you know now about the Buffalo National River that you did not know before?
- Describe your favorite part of the performance. Why?
- What did you like most about the live music performance?  
Singing? Music? Instruments?
- Describe the people in the songs. Who were they? What were they doing? Why?
- How did the music make you feel?
- How did the music help tell the story?
- What story in *Still A River* do you remember most?

### Learn More Online

Learn more about the artists

[www.stillonthehill.com](http://www.stillonthehill.com)

U.S. National Park Service - The Buffalo National River

[www.nps.gov/buff/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/buff/index.htm)

Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism - The History of the Buffalo National River

[www.arkansas.com/outdoors/buffalo40/buffalo\\_national\\_river.aspx](http://www.arkansas.com/outdoors/buffalo40/buffalo_national_river.aspx)

## Volume 14 Number 6

Colgate Classroom Series performances help students meet Common Core Standards.

### Learn more at:

[www.waltonartscenter.org](http://www.waltonartscenter.org)

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Walton Arts Center

Learning & Engagement

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