**OLA BELLE REED SONGWRITING RETREAT 2022**

The Ola Belle Reed Songwriting Retreat pays tribute to Ashe County, North Carolina’s National Heritage Fellowship Award and IBMA Lifetime Achievement Award winner. North Carolina and nationally renowned songwriters on staff are excited to share their techniques in craft and art with you. Whether you are an experienced songwriter or about to write your first song, these retreats will help you add skills to your own magic, with detailed concepts, practice and instruction. There will of course be stories and anecdotes along the way.

The weekend will be LIVE at the Ashe County Civic Center in West Jefferson, NC with a Virtual Option for classes and lectures. The Virtual option does not include song swaps and concerts.

**Instructors: Alice Gerrard, Pierce Freelon, Cathy Fink, John Cloyd Miller**

**Friday, 4/8**

**10:00 am – meet and greet, staff and class intros**

**11:00-12:30pm – Bringing the Story to Life w/John Cloyd Miller**

Good imagery and character development work to draw in the listener.  A successful song will transport the listener into the scene and make them feel invested. Songs are often just a few minutes long, but within a few lines you can develop surprisingly complex characters. We'll work to create scenes and characters that grab your attention and tug at your heart strings.

**1:00-2:30pm Hip Hop Culture and Rhyme w/Pierce Freelon**An introduction to Hip Hop culture, songwriting, storytelling and voice. This workshop will explore the art of the emcee - known by many names - MC, master of ceremonies, microphone controller, poet, griot, lyricist, songwriter, rapper ["(some) people thinking MC is shorthand for misconception" - Talib Kewli]. With roots in the West African oral tradition and a foundation in the Black Arts Movement; emceeing is a core element of Hip Hop culture and significant American musical artform. We will explore lyrics, voice, writing, delivery and improvisation (freestyle).

**4:00-5:30 – New-Old Songs (Songwriting in the tradition) w/Alice Gerrard**

Where does your inspiration come from? What kinds of sounds are you trying to get? Songwriting is generally informed, melodically I believe, by all the sounds you love, and have absorbed and internalized through the years. Mine is generally rooted in traditional Southern-based music (which in turn is a distillation of mainly African American and European American traditional music). And that includes blues, gospel, country—everyone from people you may never have heard of like Texas Gladden or Vera Hall to The Staples Singers, Aretha Franklin and George Jones—from old-time unaccompanied style to more country sounds—at least, that’s where I tend to start out. I like the idea of reaching back for sounds.  I’ll sing a bunch of songs and discuss what gives them a traditional feel.

7pm-8:30pm – **Song Swaps** (no virtual song swaps)

**Saturday, 4/9**

10-11:30am – **Priming the Pump, Courting the Muse – All Instructors**

Writing warm ups, prompts and ideas to get you started and keep you writing including creating your own writing assignments. We will try some of these in class.

**12:30-2pm – It's Not About Me w/John Cloyd Miller**

Many new writers often struggle with writing songs that don't directly relate to their own lives or experiences. In this class we'll practice writing from varied and unexpected points of view.

**3:00-4:30pm – Editing Your Song w/Cathy Fink**

Step by step, we’ll talk about the details that help you make your song better. You’ll have a chance to do some of your own editing in class and we’ll take a song or two from participants to demonstrate editing possibilities.

**4:40-7:30pm – Hangout Meet your Fellow Participants, dinner break**

**7:30pm – Staff Concert: Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Zoe & Cloyd, Alice Gerrard, Pierce Freelon**

**9:15pm** – **Song Swaps** (no virtual song swaps)

**Sunday, 4/10**

**10:00- 11:00am** – **Turning A Six Word Story Into A Song w/Cathy Fink**

We’ll be writing in class, starting with six word stories, turning them into 50 word stories and then turning them into songs, or parts of songs.

**11:15-12:45pm – Beat Making w/Pierce**

Electronic music production, drum composition and recording on the go! This workshop will explore creating an original drum kit and arranging drum sounds in a DAW (digital audio workstation), as well as incorporating beatboxing, scatting and other songwriting techniques into a mobile beat making process in the program Reason. A free trial version of Reason can be downloaded here: [https://www.reasonstudios.com/shop/product/reason-11/](https://www.reasonstudios.com/shop/product/reason-11/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

**1-2pm – Interview with Alice Gerrard**

Cathy will chat with Alice digging into her musical background, songwriting process and the events of her life that shaped her musical career as a presenter, songwriter, recording artist, archivist, advocate and activist.

2-3pm – **Prepare for Participant Showcase**

3-5pm – **Participant Showcase**

**Instructor Bios** (Alphabetical Order):

[Cathy Fink](https://www.cathymarcy.com) – Artistic Director - GRAMMY Award Winner, Cathy has won the John Lennon Songwriting Contest, International Songwriting Competition, Mid-Atlantic Songwriting Contest and has recorded 48 albums in her 48 year career, mostly with partner Marcy Marxer. Influenced by folks like Tom Paxton, Alice Gerrard, Pete Seeger and Ola Belle Reed, she writes what she wants in whatever style suits her from bluegrass to swing and from folk to rock. Her songs have been featured on NPR as commentaries and have helped propel the SHOUT AND SHINE diversity movement in the bluegrass world. She has been nominated for 12 consecutive GRAMMY Awards and her two GRAMMY’s say “Artist, Engineer, Producer”, but the title she likes best is “Social Music Conductor.” [www.cathymarcy.com](http://www.cathymarcy.com)

[Pierce Freelon](https://www.piercefreelon.com/) - Pierce Freelon is a Grammy-nominated musician, producer, and educator from Durham, North Carolina. He is the co-creator of Beat Making Lab, an Emmy Award-winning PBS web series and is the writer, composer and co-director of the PBS animated series The History of White People in America, an official selection of the Tribeca Film Festival. His critically acclaimed Children’s Music has been featured on NPR, Today Show and MSNBC. In 2022, Little, Brown books will release his debut Children's book, Daddy Daughter Day.

[Alice Gerrard](http://www.alicegerrard.com) - IBMA Lifetime Achievement Honoree, GRAMMY nominee and eclectic songwriter, Alice Gerrard is a singer and songwriter who has performed and advocated for old-time and bluegrass music for over 40 years. She plays old-time fiddle, banjo, and guitar. Her recordings with Hazel Dickens during the 1960s and ’70s influenced a generation of women musicians from Laurie Lewis to the Judds. Her solo recordings on Copper Creek Records, *Pieces of My Heart* and *Calling Me Home*garnered rave reviews in *Billboard*and *Country Music*. Alice’s song, “Agate Hill,” was an inspiration for novelist Lee Smith as she was writing her latest novel, *On Agate Hill*. Her album *Follow the Music*was nominated for a Grammy in 2015. Her songs have been recorded by Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Rhiannon Giddens and Kathy Mattea, among others. Alice was the Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke Univesity and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2009. “You Gave Me a Song” a film about Alice and her music was included in the Durham Full Frame Film Festival in March, 2019. She is founder of the *Old-Time Herald* old-time music magazine, and makes her home in Durham, NC.

[John Cloyd Miller](https://www.zoeandcloyd.com/) - John Cloyd Miller is an award-winning songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist from Asheville, NC. A twelfth generation North Carolina native and the grandson of pioneering bluegrass fiddler, Jim Shumate, John also teaches applied traditional music and songwriting at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, NC. He is 1st place winner of the prestigious Chris Austin Songwriting Contest and a recipient of an Artist Fellowship for songwriting by the North Carolina Arts Council. A long time member of the vibrant Asheville music scene, John currently performs in the acclaimed duo Zoe & Cloyd with his wife, fiddler and vocalist Natalya Zoe Weinstein. The pair were recently featured in Season 5 of the nationally syndicated PBS show, *David Holt's State of Music,*and their fourth album, *Rebuild*, was released in October 2021 on Organic Records.