

Folklorist and Documentary Producer Nick Spitzer Joins Tulane University Faculty

July 17, 2008 8:30 AM Kathryn Hobgood

khobgood@tulane.edu

504-865-5229

Renowned folklorist Nick Spitzer, creator of the public radio program *American Routes*, has joined the faculty at Tulane University. Beginning in fall 2008, Spitzer will serve as a professor of communication and American studies at Tulane. He also will serve as adjunct professor for research in anthropology and urban studies at the University of New Orleans.

Spitzer is widely recognized for his work in American music, cultures of the Gulf South, cultural creolization theory, public cultural policy and for documentaries on radio and sound recordings. *American Routes*, now in its tenth year, reaches nearly a million listeners on more than 225 outlets every week. As Spitzer joins the Tulane faculty, Tulane will collaborate in the production of *American Routes*, along with the distributor, American Public Media.

Spitzer served as Louisiana's first state folklorist from 1978-85, directing programs devoted to documenting and interpreting the vernacular expressions of traditional communities. He went on to serve as senior folklife specialist at the Smithsonian Institution (1985-1990) and became artistic director of the Folk Masters series of concerts initiated at Carnegie Hall and broadcast nationally on public radio from 1990-97.

Spitzer holds a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Texas and was a fellow at the School of American Research in Santa Fe. He first taught at Tulane in 2004 as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities. He has served on the boards of the American Folklore Society, Fund for Folk Culture, and the National Council for the Traditional Arts. In 2006 he was named Louisiana Humanist of the Year for his role in cultural recovery post-Katrina, and made a Fellow of the American Folklore Society. In 2007 Spitzer received a Guggenheim fellowship for his research into traditions of creativity in Creole communities.

Spitzer co-edited *Public Folklore*, now in its third printing and widely used in graduate teaching. His writings on Creole culture, American music and musicians, and the cultural recovery of New Orleans have appeared in numerous academic journals and edited volumes.

“Nick Spitzer is a great scholar and public intellectual who is in large measure responsible for the wider attention now being paid to south Louisiana and New Orleans cultures,” said Michael Bernstein, the university's Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. “Having his skills available to our students, and participating in the support of his marvelous weekly public radio broadcast, is a truly wonderful opportunity for Tulane.”

Nick Spitzer noted, “Tulane has been a bellwether in the recovery of the city and region. I look forward to contributing perspectives on and creative work in vernacular culture and the media. It's all very exciting.”