

Teacher, musician wins N.C. Humanities writing award

BY LYNN FELDER

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Aaron Ballance, a Winston-Salem native who attended and teaches at Appalachian State University, is the 2017 recipient of the Linda Flowers Literary Award, a project of the North Carolina Humanities Council.

The award was announced during the North Carolina Writers' Network Fall Conference in Wrightsville Beach in November.

In addition to writing poetry, Ballance is a musician. He was the resonator guitar player for the band Dehllia Low, and he has been performing with the Americana band Tellico since 2013. He started building resonator guitars this year and is currently working on a lap steel guitar.

"Like a lot of artists, I'm drawn to multiple mediums," Ballance said from his home in Boone. "Poetry draws upon music, and music draws upon language and poetry. Even if you're mostly an instrumentalist, as I am, sometimes there's a need for a story line."

Ballance, 37, said that he sometimes takes a break from poetry to work on music and vice versa.

"Sometimes, I'll take a break from one, and then it's like going back to an old friend," he said. "I hope that music maybe gives my writing a perspective that it might not have otherwise."

This year's contest judges described Ballance's work as "wonderful stream

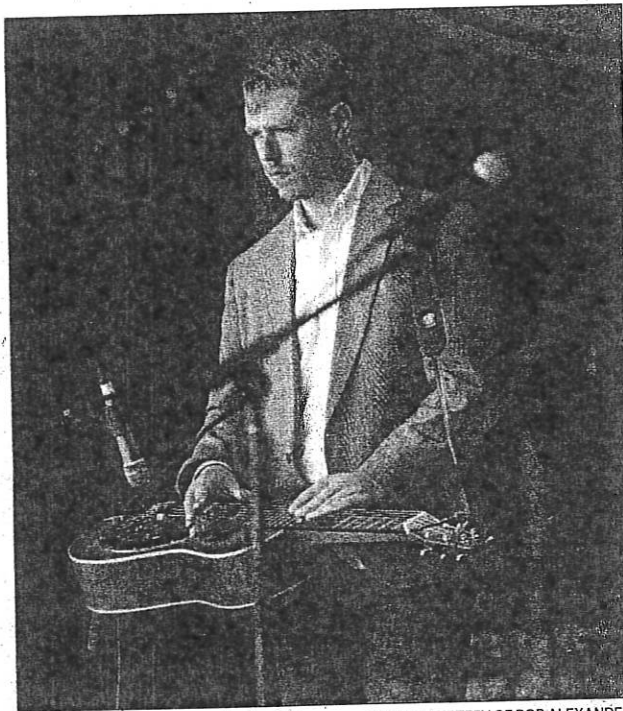


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Aaron Ballance, who plays resonator guitar with the Americana band Tellico in addition to being a teacher at App State, was honored for his poetry.

of consciousness narrative" whose "grittiness in language takes you to a grounded place" and "embodies the spirit of the award. Sophisticated."

Ballance received a \$1,500 honorarium and a week-long residency at Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities in Southern Pines, which he will take in June. As a memorial to past trustee, professor, writer and humanist Linda Flowers, the Council annually awards the Linda Flowers Literary Award to writers who care about North Carolina and writing truthfully.

Ballance is also the winner of the Noel Callow Poetry Award, the Amón

Liner Poetry Award, and his work has appeared in The Greensboro Review and Poetry Daily.

A graduate of Reynolds High School, Ballance is a lecturer in English at Appalachian State, where he first studied creative writing as an undergraduate. He has a Master of Fine Arts degree in poetry from UNC-Greensboro.

In 2010, Ballance won the Rockygrass Dobro Championship in Lyons, Colo., and was a finalist in the National Resonator Guitar Competition in 2005. He has recorded and performed with numerous musical artists, at venues and festivals across the country.