

12-string guitarist returns for Alfred University concert

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Award-winning musician and composer, Neil Jacobs, considered to be a master of the 12-string guitar, will return to entertain Alfred University audiences at 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 1, in Holmes Auditorium, Harder Hall, on the AU campus. The concert is open to the public, free of charge. With his own style of playing that the St. Louis Riverfront Times calls "mesmerizing" and the Austin Chronicle describes as "the rockin'est since early Leo Kottke," Jacobs covers the full spectrum of styles and dynamics. Touching on music as diverse as Gypsy, World, Balkan, Jazz, and Finger-style guitar, Jacobs maintains his own refreshing and energetic style. A self-taught musician, he draws inspiration from his world travels and experiences. Most recently, his focus has been the Gypsy music of Eastern Europe and the folk music of the Balkans. After the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, Jacobs' fascination with Eastern European folk music drew him back to Europe. Traveling by train with a backpack and two 12-string guitars, Jacobs was invited to perform throughout Europe. He played for Polish army and school children in Olstyn, Poland, the rejuvenated club scene in Prague, villas in Italy, war-torn Zagreb, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia. He became intrigued by the music of Gypsies. In 1992, the American Balkan music and dance ensemble, Zivili, invited Jacobs to compose and arrange Gypsy compositions. During this time, he became proficient at various authentic folk instruments including prim, sargia, brac, mandocello, and bugaria, while adapting rare Gypsy music to the 12-string guitar. In 1994-1995, Jacobs was selected as a cultural representative to Spain, thereby performing throughout Spain, as well as granted the opportunity to study Gypsy music of Seville. In 1996, Neil returned to the war-ravaged Balkans on an extended bus tour performing for refuge camps and orphanages throughout Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, culminating in an emotional concert with Zivili in Central Sarajevo. Upon completion of his third CD, "American Gypsy," Jacobs began a whirlwind tour performing at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Capitol Steps in Washington D.C., toured Italy and the Czech Republic, and accompanied "Zivili" on UNESCO's Balkan Youth Reconciliation Seminar in Plodiv, Bulgaria. Jacobs' most memorable performance was at the Gypsy camp at Plodiv, a Gypsy community of over 30,000. Jacobs continues to tour nationally with "American Gypsy", solo, and also with Zivili. A performer for the past 25 years, Jacobs' compositions are available on three discs: World Blue, Cold Fish, and American Gypsy, which was nominated as CD of the year by the American Independent Music Awards. His 4th CD, Secret Places, is due to be released Oct. 15.