



## Free UNH Concert April 8 Celebrates Ben Franklin

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Ben Franklin's invention of the glass armonica will be featured at a free concert celebrating his 300th birthday when University of New Hampshire music students join with high school students from Franklin, Mass., Saturday, April 8, 2006, at 8 p.m. in UNH's Johnson Theatre. The concert is free and open to the public, thanks to a grant from the UNH office of the vice president of research and public service.

In addition to revolutionary period pieces performed by the UNH Chamber Singers, University of New Hampshire music professor and pianist Christopher Kies has composed Franklin Portrait, a piece of music based on Franklin's own writings that give a good view of his personality. This 10-movement piece will be performed by the Franklin students, 20 UNH instrumentalists, the UNH Chamber Singers, and narrator John-Michael Albert.

"This will be a great opportunity for anyone who wants to experience Franklin in a live way," Kies said. "His writings are very witty, and still appeal to modern readers. For quite some time I have been interested in combining music with narration. My earlier projects made use of the wonderful children's books by William Steig and also the poetry of Ogden Nash. For this project I had to learn a lot about Franklin, and in the process I gained a lot of respect for him and his sense of humor."

According to Kies, UNH and the high school in Franklin, Mass., have been connected for years. Several UNH graduates teach in the town's schools, including the high school's music director, and two current UNH music students hail from Franklin High School. Franklin, moreover, was the first town to name itself after Ben Franklin in 1778.

The concert will also feature a special lecture and performance by Alisa Nakashian-Holsberg on the glass armonica, a rare instrument invented by Franklin in 1761 after he attended a concert given on the musical glasses (upright glasses played by rubbing with wet fingers).