



American Banjo Museum Quarterly

Summer 2020

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2020 A VIRTUAL BANJO FEST



As most of the world has been turned upside down because of the Coronavirus the American Banjo Museum has also been experiencing the effects. It is with heavy heart that we've had to reimagine this year's BANJO FEST and, with that, we are forced to reimagine this year's ABM Hall of Fame induction ceremonies as well. Each year since the museum opened in 1998, the American Banjo Museum has had the opportunity to honor the best of the best in the banjo world with induction into the Hall of Fame. Originally established as The National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame, early honorees were jazz age four-string banjo performers, educators, promoters and manufacturers. In 2014, embracing the opportunity to honor all types of banjos and playing styles, with the addition of the categories honoring five-string as well as other types of

banjos, the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame was established.

However, with the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases, safety is our top priority. As there simply is not a means of organizing such a large event with people from all around the country while ensuring everyone's safety and well-being, this year's BANJO FEST will be a virtual event with many of the elements which have defined BANJO FEST in recent years being streamed via the internet.

As we cannot host our banjo friends from around the country who would typically be "road-tripping" to OKC and BANJO FEST, we're going to bring a BANJO FEST road trip experience to you from the comfort of your living room! Leading up to the induction ceremonies, we invite you to tune in at noon each day from October 11-16 for an interview with each of our inductees about their life's work with the banjo. On Friday, October 17 at 7PM, we'll be broadcasting a coast to coast road trip from the comfort of your own home as we visit each of our honorees and present their induction into the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame from their hometowns.

Make plans now to follow our Facebook page, website, or YouTube page to view interviews, performances and inductions to the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame as we celebrate this year's inductees.



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Oklahoma City, OK 73104
405-604-2793
www.AmericanBanjoMuseum.com

MISSION

The mission of the American Banjo Museum is to preserve and promote the banjo while expanding appreciation and understanding of its history and music.

STAFF

Johnny Baier, Executive Director
Margie Smith-Robbins, Assistant Administrator
Rachel Reichert, Sales & Marketing
Sherril Mitchell, Reception
Ellie Burns, Administrative Assistant
Lucas Ross, Community Outreach & Promotion Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Danny Rubio, New Orleans, LA
Debbie Schreyer, Maplewood, MN
Devin Tower, Palm Beach Gardens, FL



During the very difficult time when affected businesses and organizations were doing their utmost to support the mandates aimed at preserving the health and well being of all, it was interesting to note that the directives which temporarily closed the doors of many arts and cultural institutions referred to those entities as “non-essential.” While food, clothing and shelter are certainly important elements in a healthy lifestyle (lest we forget that, sadly, many do without them on a regular basis), it is the non-tangible essentials found in the arts that often make those lives more worth living. Music, dance, literature, theater and visual arts all bring unspeakable joy to life – particularly in troubled times. During the unsettling recent months, an unprecedented demand for arts programming has seen traditional in-person audience experiences replaced, for the time being, with virtual concerts, shows, recitals and exhibitions streamed via the internet. In reviewing the overwhelming and positive response to such

programming (including the ABM’s Virtual at Noon series and other live streamed events), it becomes abundantly clear that the arts truly are essential to a fulfilling and balanced life. Thankfully we are not alone in this belief. In recognition of our efforts to keep the museum’s important mission and message a constant throughout the COVID-19 crisis, we have been the recent recipient of grants from the Oklahoma Humanities, the National Endowment for Humanities, the Oklahoma Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. In addition to this exceptional level of support at the state and national levels, many individuals who revel in the unabashed joy which music and our beloved banjo has added to their lives have expressed their sincere appreciation through both kind words as well as generous and much appreciated donations. As Abraham Lincoln prepared to assume the office of the presidency, he quoted a Turkish proverb deemed true and appropriate for all times and situations, “And this too shall pass away.” As we all anticipate that day and an eventual return to normalcy, we look forward to the greater strength, perseverance and endurance which is an unspoken, yet valuable, upside of having lived through tough times with an attitude of positivity, kindness and respect for others.

Johnny Baier
Executive Director



Virtual-at-Noon

With the temporary virus-induced closure and in lieu of our usual schedule of events the American Banjo Museum put on several weeks of daily virtual-at-noon performances. This included a huge range of videos from tours of our exhibits, to sneak peaks at our archives, to workshops, to live interactive performances, to interviews with famous banjoists. While we have taken a step back from creating virtual content every



day, we still have all of these videos available online on both our website and on Facebook. A special thanks to Johnny Baier and Lucas Ross for filming and editing most of this programming, as well as a big Thank-you to Tray Wellington and Wayne Cantwell for putting on live interactive concerts for us during the height of the pandemic. You can still visit the American Banjo Museum from the comfort of your own home through our virtual tours.



VISIT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

-  [BanjoMuseum](#)
-  [@banjomuseum](#)
-  [American.Banjo.Museum](#)
-  [AmericanBanjoMuseum](#)

Virtual Tours and Videos can be viewed on the Museum’s Facebook Page or Website [americanbanjomuseum.com](#)



Save the Date

VIRTUAL BANJO FEST

Interviews at Noon October 11 -16

Induction October 17, 2020

Get to Know a Board Member



fingerstyle 5-string and enjoy how well-suited that instrument is to playing ragtime. In my banjo history lecture concerts, I demonstrate Minstrel Stroke Style on a fretless banjo; Classic 5-string on a nylon strung open back; and Plectrum, Tenor, and Bluegrass all on steel strung resonator banjos. My husband Tom accompanies me on a stand up Bass Banjo and I even add a Piccolo Banjo for the long and short of it.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? (Where you're from/school/profession/family)

A: My hometown is Mankato, Minnesota. I met my husband, Tom Owens, while I was playing banjo on a Mississippi riverboat and he was the captain. He joined the act singing and playing bass for our 7 year run at the Showboat Casino in Atlantic City, NJ. Happy to come home and build our own house in Maplewood, MN, we are both professional musicians playing as a duo or with our "Dixieland Pickup Band" in a 1930 Ford Model AA truck.

Q: What got you started in music, and how did you end up with the banjo?

A: I don't feel that "end up with the banjo" describes me. It was the other way around. My second grade teacher reminisced to me how excited I was to tell her that "My dad was going to teach me how to play the Banjo!" I did "end up" having obligatory piano lessons, but it was banjo that I practiced the most. When it was time to join the school band in 6th grade, my hand flew up in the air volunteering to play banjo in the band. After being told that banjo didn't fit in, I "ended up" playing an old cornet. Playing band jobs with my dad and brother and leading

my own dixieland band throughout high school, I knew that I would pursue a career as a banjo player but was expected to get a college degree. When the local university would not allow me to use banjo as my major instrument, I figured that if banjo wasn't musical enough for them, just give me a drum. I "ended up" with a percussion major for my BS in Music Education. I left school to tour the country as a promotional banjoist for Sara Lee Corporation, and then traveled to Germany for Peter Meyer's International Banjo Tour. With headliners, Buddy Wachter, Tony Trischka, Chris Sands, and Buck Kelly; riding on the "Banjo Bus" was a traveling "Banjo Master's Class" for me. I returned to my hometown so I could pursue my own course of banjo study in my dad's basement banjo archives.

Q: What made you want to serve on the American Banjo Museum's Board of Directors?

A: I have always loved the American Banjo Museum ever since its start in Guthrie, OK. For the Grand Opening of the new museum in OKC and the inclusion of all styles of banjo, I was thrilled to perform my "Banjo Entertainers" History program based on my dad's research with which I had assisted and proofread over the years. Needless to say, it was an honor to be included with my banjo heroes and mentors in the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame. I feel that my lifetime of being immersed in banjo and growing up hearing many of the actual banjos in the museum being played by those who have gone before gives me a great appreciation and a unique perspective in the care taking and sharing of this American musical treasure with future generations.



Outreach

While community outreach has looked different over the past few months, our own Outreach and Promotion Coordinator, Lucas Ross, was able to find some creative ways to safely bring the banjo



to the young and young-at-heart. Virtual tours have been a new feature on our social media pages and an Oklahoma based camp featured us for a special walk-through visit and performance. Camp Chaverim is a Jewish summer day camp located in Oklahoma City that highlighted the museum for their arts day. Although our friends from Spanish Cove Retirement Village weren't able to make their annual trip to the museum due to COVID-19 issues, Lucas went to them and played for their Fourth of July block party. Their staff and volunteers

created a safe and fun way to celebrate with drinks, watermelon and banjo! And, while Independence Day celebrations were slimmed down this year in OKC, we were invited to play throughout the day on the Bricktown River Walk as patrons walked along the paths and enjoyed riverboat rides!



The American Banjo Museum and COVID-19

After two months of being closed to the public, we are excited to once again welcome visitors to the American Banjo Museum. Like many similar institutions, we are taking extra precautions to keep our staff and visitors safe; extra cleaning, requiring all guests to wear masks, limiting the number of guests in the museum at one time, as well as guests, staff, and volunteers maintaining social distancing. We have also postponed jams and in-person concerts for the foreseeable future until it is safe to gather in larger crowds once again. We hope all of our banjo family is staying safe and healthy out there, and we look forward to seeing you at the museum! We'd also like to thank Oklahoma Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities for their generous grant helping us to keep our doors open as well as everyone else who has made donations to the Museum.



WOMEN OF THE BANJO



While Kermit the Frog may be on his journey back to New York after his landmark 18-month run in the Jim Henson: Life and Legacy exhibit which recently closed, we have a fresh new exhibit for you to experience...Women of the Banjo! This exclusive exhibit celebrates the roles which women have played in the colorful past, vibrant present and unlimited future of the banjo. Trend setting female banjoists of all styles - including Jazz, Bluegrass, Clawhammer and Pop represent the countless women who have made significant contributions to the banjo's place in American music and popular culture. Stay tuned to

our social media for a very special addition to the exhibit coming soon!



Americana Fest Online



The American Banjo Museum held its fifth annual AMERICANA FEST on June 27th despite the fact that, due to COVID-19, the typically "in-person" event was restructured to become an afternoon long program of music and entertainment streamed via the internet. While we wish we could have seen all your lovely smiling faces in person, the well-being of our guests, staff and artists is our priority. On the upside, hosting the event online allowed us the opportunity to reach infinitely more people than our museum could hold in person. And, if you missed it live, you can still watch the event now on our YouTube or Facebook pages.

Like past events, the day featured almost every style of banjo you could possibly imagine. Wayne Cantwell and his Traditional Music of the Open Prairie started off the show followed by a creative socially distance show from Sinner Friends (located in MI and TN) featuring Aaron Jonah Lewis. Our very own Lucas Ross and Johnny Baier also performed as well as Oklahoma's Legendary fiddle player, Byron Berline and his band. Americana Fest was made possible with a grant from the Oklahoma Arts Council and donations from the



Bricktown Association, BancFirst, KFOR News 4, as well as door prize donations from Myriad Gardens and the Oklahoma City Zoo.



Letter from the Board

In this time of COVID-19, when there is so much uncertainty, can we just assume that the American Banjo Museum will always continue to operate and grow? Executive Director, Johnny Baier, and the Museum staff have had to make some serious adjustments. With the Museum closed, and folks unable to visit, they have worked tirelessly to find ways to remain relevant and accessible.

Their efforts are paying off using internet and video technologies, combined with lots of time, effort and creativity expended to continue sharing the treasures of our collection, current exhibits, concerts, insights into Banjo history and virtual museum visits. Putting all these parts together they have been able to reach our members and an audience that today cannot travel to Oklahoma City to experience the American Banjo Museum.

The hardest part has been to generate funds to sustain the Museum without admissions and other visitor based revenue until the new normal starts to look like the old normal. So we need to ask ourselves..... Can we continue to assume that the Museum will continue at the high level that we have come to expect? We all Assume it will continue, but shouldn't we Assure the future success of our Banjo Museum?

We need to flip our thinking from assuming the ABM's future is secure to assuring the ABM's future is secure. Assuring the ABM's future requires nothing. Assuring means making it happen! We need you to help assure that the ABM can continue during this time of uncertainty to fulfill its

mission, continue with our online presentations and be ready to welcome visitors back when this pandemic is over. Your support is vital to our success and future. We need you to help Assure a bright productive future for the ABM.

Theresa and I have made this commitment. We are Museum members, have committed to make regular donations and the ABM is included in our estate planning. I sincerely hope you will join us and many of your fellow banjo lovers with similar commitments to assure the future success of the American Banjo Museum.

Included with each newsletter is an envelope asking for your support. Please use it to make a donation today, as large as you can. Then, become a member or renew your membership and make the Museum part of your estate plan. Our efforts together will fund the American Banjo Museum's efforts to Preserve, Promote and Present the Banjo. Thank you for your support!

Paul Poirier, Board Member



ABM Membership

The American Banjo Museum wishes to recognize and thank new members and those that have renewed their membership the Second quarter of 2020.

Individual Membership

- Bill Brisotti
- Terry Collins
- Peter Fidler
- Jay Kreider
- Charles Murawski
- Matt Shipman

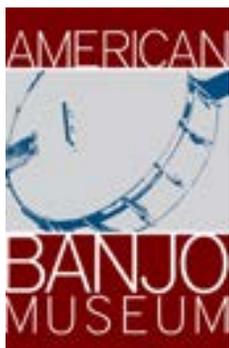
Couple Membership

- Roger & Ellie Burns
- Sheri Copeland
- Barry Grant
- Mike & Deb Hignite
- Lance MacLean
- Tammy Slauson

Family Membership

- Richard Dulaney
- Ernest Messner

To become a member, gift a membership, or upgrade your current membership call 405-604-2793 or visit americanbanjomuseum.com.



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