



# AMERICAN BANJO MUSEUM QUARTERLY

Winter 2021

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Since 1998 the American Banjo Museum has had the annual opportunity to honor the best of the best in the banjo world with induction into the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame. Originally established as The National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame, early honorees were jazz age four-string banjo pioneers as well as the contemporary artists, educators, manufacturers and promoters who carried on the traditions of their predecessors. In its infancy, our museum itself was an extension of the Hall of Fame.

In the years preceding 2014, more than 70 individuals and entities in the four-string banjo world whose career accomplishments might have otherwise gone unrecognized were honored by the Hall of Fame. However, as time passed and the museum grew to embrace all types of banjos and playing styles, it became clear that the Hall of Fame must evolve as well.

As such, in 2013, the ABM Board of Directors voted to establish an annual performance category to honor all styles of five-string banjo playing as well as opening the other previously four-string banjo exclusive non-performance categories to all types of banjos. With this move the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame was established.

We are excited to announce the 2021 American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame inductees: Jens Kruger for Five-String Performance, Brad Roth for Four-String Performance, Paul Buskirk for Historical, Greg Rich for Design & Manufacture and Scott Whitfield for Instruction & Education. These five individuals will be inducted into the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame in the Fall of this year. As the travel and event restrictions resulting from COVID -19 are lifted, plans for this year's BANJO FEST activities will be announced. Until then, please join us in congratulating this year's honorees!



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Oklahoma City, OK 73104  
405-604-2793  
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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Waynesville, OH  
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John Mumford, Centennial, CO  
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Debbie Schreyer, Maplewood, MN  
Devin Tower, Palm Beach Gardens, FL

**Community Outreach**

As always with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been adapting to the “new normal” and finding other ways to participate in the community we hold dear while keeping everything as safe as possible. This year we had a special “Banjo Elf” volunteer to perform some virtual and socially distanced concerts for several nursing homes and school programs. We put up a virtual sign-up sheet on our website, and the helpful elf performed for all who signed up! You may notice that the Banjo Elf does look a bit like our Community Outreach & Promotion Coordinator Lucas Ross, neither the Banjo Elf or Lucas have any comment on the similarities, but we have yet to see them in the same room at the same time.



**A Couple Of Lessons We Learned During COVID-19**

Just a year ago most of us had never heard of the virus which has changed all of our lives in so many ways. When the diverse effects of coronavirus, health or otherwise, were being discovered and digested, I believed a positive outcome of the pandemic might be its potential for bringing us all together in a common cause. While my naïve attempt at being a social strategist didn't work out as planned, the past year has taught us all a lot about focusing upon what's important - particularly during the most challenging of times. While the mission of a museum dedicated to a quirky musical instrument may seem insignificant in the midst of a global health and economic crisis, the social and emotional support provided by our worldwide family of kindred musical spirits has, for many, been an essential cog in dealing with the changes to the ongoing routines and events which have been erased from our calendars.

As we look to the near future with the same uncertainty as the past year with regard to hosting and participating in person events, we recall the positive and far reaching effect that our virtual programming via the Internet has had upon thousands of people, many of whom have yet to have a chance to visit our museum in person. While we never could have anticipated the need for such programming, when the demand became apparent, we responded – and a new cycle of energy with our growing constituency and means of fulfilling our mission was established. Of course, we are not alone in this revelation... many museums, musicians and performance venues have all come to the same conclusion that, even as we are essentially fighting an important war on multiple health and social fronts, the artistic and creative intangibles that are part of the fabric which makes up our culture are worth fighting for, preserving and enjoying in the process as well. Knowing how widespread and important such virtual programming has become, we have reimagined our game plan to include regular Internet presentations of performances, workshops, tours, archival features and other specialty programming. While we anticipate with great expectation a time when we will again be able to host large, in-person events, part of this “new normal” will find us committed to regularly presenting an international audience with

interesting and quality banjo specific programs aimed at filling the annoying gap that currently exists in any banjo enthusiast's life. As a member of the American Banjo Museum, you'll know of these programs before they happen...if your not already a member, now is the perfect time to join! But for now, stay tuned!

Johnny Baier  
Executive Director

**Membership**

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

**Individual Membership**

- Eric Harold Affsprung
- Peter Bakke
- Gerald Capie
- Eddie Collins
- Thomas Collins
- Greg Englebretson
- Jason Gaines
- Jeff Hausler
- Paul Jacobson
- Bruce Miner

**Couple Membership**

- Charles Harris

**Family Membership**

- Earl Folk

**Lifetime Membership**

- Jim Davis
- Charles Lillie

To become a member, gift a membership, or upgrade your current membership call 405-604-2793 or visit [americanbanjomuseum.com](http://americanbanjomuseum.com).

**VISIT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!**



- BanjoMuseum
- @banjomuseum
- American.Banjo.Museum
- AmericanBanjoMuseum

Virtual programming can be viewed on the Museum's Facebook Page or Website: [americanbanjomuseum.com](http://americanbanjomuseum.com)

## Meet the 2021 Inductees



**JENS KRUGER - Five-String Performance -** Known for his inventive, hard to categorize musical style of composition and performance, the virtuosic playing style of Jens Kruger ranges from the very complex to the simple and profound. As part of The Kruger Brothers, Jens has raised the awareness and stature of bluegrass music by writing and performing classical pieces that incorporate the instrumentation of banjo, guitar and bass into classical music settings. Born in Switzerland, Kruger and his brother Uwe left home to become street musicians. As adults they were billed as *The Kruger Brothers*, eventually adding a third “brother,” Joel Landsberg, from New York City. Their interest in the music of Doc Watson motivated them to relocate near where Doc lived, in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina in 2003. The intervening years have seen Jens become the 2013 recipient of the *Steve Martin Prize for Excellence in Banjo and Bluegrass*, and *The Kruger Brothers* becomes a worldwide phenomenon in the world of acoustic music.

**BRAD ROTH - Four-String Performance -** First inspired as a youngster by his dad’s banjo playing - and later Eddie Peabody, Brad Roth evolved into a serious musician and plectrum banjo artist respected by audiences and fellow banjoists alike. Although dedicated to his aspirations to become a banjo soloist, in 1974 Roth became part of a Dixieland band called the *Jazz Minors*, performing at the White House, *Disneyland* and the *Sacramento Jazz Jubilee*. After years as a fulltime Disney performer (including national television appearances on *The New Mickey Mouse Club*), Roth took a day job which introduced him to banjoist and promoter named Steve Simpson. From that association, *Banjomania* - a mainstream national banjo act was born. Following *Banjomania*, Roth has spent the last twenty years as part of the *Night Blooming Jazzmen* while passing his musical passion on to his daughters and their band *Euphoric Swing*.



**GREG RICH – Design & Manufacture -** With no banjo repairperson in Newport Beach, California, Greg Rich began learning to repair banjos while still in high school. Inspired by nearby banjo collectors, repair work led to Rich crafting high quality replicas of 1920s era Gibson Mastertone banjos. As such, when the modern day *Gibson Company* wanted to bring back the quality of their golden era banjos, Rich was hired to achieve the task. So successful were his efforts that Gibson banjos produced during his tenure at Gibson (1984-1993) are known and revered today as “Greg Rich Era” banjos among players and collectors. His later partnering with Mark Taylor (forming Rich & Taylor) netted equal quality instruments and set the stage for Rich’s current partnership with the *Recording King* brand which has introduced high quality, affordable instruments to today’s banjo marketplace.

**SCOTT WHITFIELD - Instruction & Education -** Well-known as a multi-instrumental performer, vocalist and entertainer, Scott Whitfield has earned equal respect as an educator during an enviable 40+ year career. Seriously educated and versed in musical styles ranging from jazz to blues to country to rock, Whitfield shares his real-world on stage experience with the hungry young musical minds who learn from him and his staff at *Scott Sound Music* near Dallas, Texas. In addition to the thousands of students he has taught over the years, writing two banjo method books and developing the curriculum for the *International Banjo College*, Whitfield has also served as the band director at the *Levine Academy* in Dallas since 2002. Whether performing on, teaching or promoting the banjo, Scott Whitfield has dedicated his life to the betterment of the instrument and the music it is capable of creating.



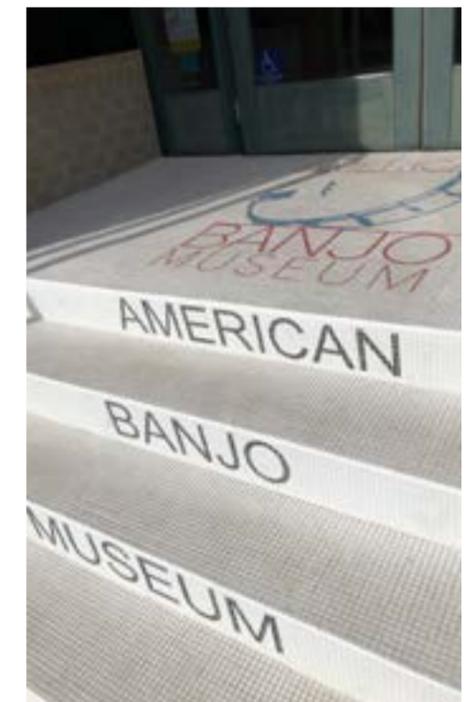
**PAUL BUSKIRK - Historical -** A stunning multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and producer, Paul Buskirk’s stellar and deserved reputation as a tenor banjo player happened somewhat by accident. Established as one of the few mandolin players in the 1940s and 50s to challenge Bill Monroe’s preeminence (actually developing a new style of playing the instrument), it was Gene Austin’s suggestion that he apply that technique to the tenor banjo that began Buskirk’s banjo journey. While his career found him writing hit songs and producing platinum albums for Willie Nelson, Buskirk endeared himself to several generations of tenor banjoists who – primarily as a result of his amazing and diverse body of tenor banjo recordings - continue to revere the artistry, technique and new musical voice that he brought to the often maligned instrument.

## Stepping-Up!

You might notice a brand-new addition next time you visit the Bricktown neighborhood in Oklahoma City. Not only has the American Banjo Museum always had the best looking sign in the neighborhood, but now we have steps to match!



A mosaic of the American Banjo Museum's logo and name was installed on the front steps of the museum. This makes the museum easier for passersby to notice at street level, in addition to beautification of the building. We've seen countless Bricktown visitors sit outside the museum to take photos on the steps since they've been installed, and we look forward to all of you visiting and doing the same!





**Holiday Fun!**

As you are probably all used to hearing at this point, we are doing our best to keep everyone safe during the current pandemic. With that in mind, we have continued to modify our events to be virtual. Although we still miss all your smiling faces, we're grateful that the internet allowed us to bring our holiday programming to an even larger audience!



This year, in place of our usual *Candy Cane Christmas* our Executive Director, Johnny Baier, along with our Community Outreach and Promotion Coordinator, Lucas Ross, put on a Christmas Carol stream to get everyone in the Christmas spirit! Director Johnny Baier also put on a *New Year's Eve Pizza Parlor Sing-Along* to help ring in 2021! We know you can't exactly visit a *Shakey's Pizza Parlor* right now, at least we can bring the next best thing to your living room!



**Virtual Programming is Here to Stay!**

If you missed either of these streams, or want to check out any of our other virtual content they are still available on [youtube.com/americanbanjomuseum](https://youtube.com/americanbanjomuseum). Also be sure to keep an eye out for our upcoming weekly programming starting on Saturday, March 6, we will be featuring new and exciting weekly programming from the American Banjo Museum! Be sure to mark your calendars!

**Letter from the Board**

**Leaving A Legacy**

In any discipline, whether it be car racing, theater, banjo playing, or anything else, to be in a Hall of Fame makes you a member of a small elite group. To get there, you must first of all be very talented. People really appreciate talent, but raw talent won't get you too far, so then there is the need to be dedicated and to work hard to be the best at your craft. The hours and hours of daily practice required to master the techniques and to put them on display, appreciated by all but recognized by few. Finally, and most importantly, you need to be supported by an enthusiastic audience. Without an audience and its support, there is no need for any performance, nobody would know of the talent, the work, or the person. To be in a Hall of Fame is the result of a lifetime commitment to excellence. If you take away any of the three vital aspects, your chances to be in any Hall of Fame are almost nonexistent.

Now, compare The American Banjo Museum, to a Hall of Fame prospect. The museum started in Guthrie, OK, raw talent got things off to a good start. That was followed by years of daily dedication, work and long hours to improve and refine the Museum. The Museum grew and devoted time and talent to its archives, the collection, the exhibits, even moving the location to Oklahoma City to

upgraded facilities. But that didn't end the work, countless hours were spent considering and proposing a revamping of the Museum mission to include all styles and types of banjo and finally revamping our own Museum's Hall of Fame, to make it a truly world class event and raise the awareness and stature to a coveted honor for deserving banjo artists.

All of this is done for the benefit of our audience, you! Without an audience all of this would be meaningless. You, are what we, as a Museum are here for and like any artist, we depend on our audience for our support, yes there it is again, we depend on you for support! If you are reading this, I know you are a supporter of the American Banjo Museum. All of us, from the Board of Directors, our Executive Director and our dedicated staff say THANK YOU! We truly appreciate you and your continued support.

As a member of our audience, you know the dedication and commitment to excellence we have at the ABM. So now I'll ask you to help us in a way that can only be done by you. In addition to your donations, we need your help to expand our audience and our base of support by spreading the word about the ABM to your friends and relatives. Ask them to take a look at who we are and what we do, ask them to become a member of the Museum and

become a supporter. Word of mouth is very strong advertising when it comes from you, our audience!

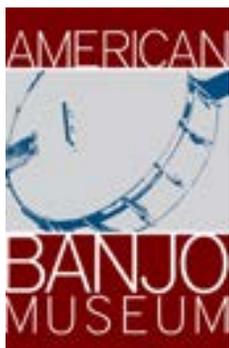
Theresa and I have made this commitment. We are committed to help growing the support to the ABM's future and success. I hope that you will join us in this project. So, I ask you again, please take a few moments to become a museum member, make a donation and to encourage your friends to do the same. Thank you for your ongoing support and please tell all your friends!

Paul Poirier,  
Board Member



DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT OUR VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING AT:

[YOUTUBE.COM/AMERICANBANJOMUSEUM](https://youtube.com/americanbanjomuseum)



9 East Sheridan Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73104

**WE CAN'T**

**WAIT TO SEE**

**YOU SOON!**

