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Steve Martin Donates Custom-Made Banjo to ABM!



Actor, comedian, author, and modern-day banjo icon, Steve Martin, recently donated a unique piece of banjo history to the American Banjo Museum in Oklahoma City...

Established in 1998 by *The Kennedy Center* in Washington, D.C., the *Mark Twain Prize* recognizes people who have had an impact on American society in ways similar to the distinguished 19th century novelist and essayist best known as *Mark Twain*. As a social commentator, satirist and creator of memorable characters, Samuel Clemens was a fearless observer of society, who startled and outraged many while delighting and informing many more with his uncompromising perspective of social injustice and personal folly. He revealed the great truth of humor when he said "against the assault of laughter nothing can stand."

Joining other recipients of the award including Jonathan Winters, Carol Burnett, Richard Pryor, and George

Carlin among others, the 2005 recipient of the *Mark Twain Prize* was Steve Martin. To commemorate the honor *The Kennedy Center* commissioned the Gibson Company to create a one-of-a-kind banjo which was subsequently presented to Martin. The engraved and gold-plated banjo features a special mother-of-pearl inlays on the fingerboard depicting *The Kennedy Center* along with a laser etched image of Mark Twain on the resonator. Steve Martin's name and the date of presentation are also etched into the instrument's armrest. After visiting the museum in June of 2019, Martin was inspired to offer this one-of-a-kind banjo to be shared with and enjoyed by ABM visitors.

"The museum is fantastic and will be a really good home for this special banjo," Martin said. ABM executive director, Johnny Baier, commented, "To many people of the current generation, Steve Martin is the banjo. Being able to display and share one of his personal instruments - a banjo which melds both the musical and comedic sides of such a beloved and respected entertainer and musician - is truly an honor for us."

The banjo, now a part of the museum's permanent collection, will become the centerpiece of an upcoming exhibit at the American Banjo Museum chronicling the banjo life and contributions of Steve Martin. Along with the "Mark Twain" banjo will be rare photos and videos as well as a pristine 1927 Gibson *Florentine* model banjo which was part of the Steve Martin collection and acquired through the consideration of ABM board of directors member, Devin Tower.

From the Director



9 East Sheridan Ave.
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
Janet Raines, Sales & Marketing
Sherril Mitchell, Reception
Ellie Burns, Administrative Assistant
Lucas Ross, Education & Promotion

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During the past several years the American Banjo Museum has been engaged in different types of fundraising activities including a capital campaign, bi-annual mail appeals, newsletter inserts and social media promotions. For your support of these endeavors we begin by saying "thank you!" Yet, while your financial support is essential to our existence, all of these efforts have really been aimed at allowing you to feel a piece of the ownership in our important mission. As I am not skilled in fundraising, I decided to endeavor to better understand why some of our major donors support the museum. During my grassroots survey it became clear to me that certain donors were never actually asked for their support – but they contributed anyway. When asked "why?" the general response was along the lines of "I believe that what the museum is doing is important." The majority of the funds that keep our doors open are based on that belief...a belief that began with Jack Canine's vision and support; was carried through to our staff, board, and existing donors; and continues on with every person who understands and supports the importance of preserving and promoting the banjo's unique place in American history and culture.

More than most, I have a passion for this museum which has consumed me and become my life's work. While I am not particularly good at asking people for contributions, I am very good at transmitting my passion for the museum to others. And, while it is my feeling that people who believe in the museum will support it without being asked, professional fundraisers disagree, insisting that donors must be asked for contributions. So, I will ask you to start by sharing in the passion and belief which has allowed our staff and board to bring your incredible museum to the point that it is at today and if that belief is sincere, please make a contribution to help us propel our beloved banjo and museum into a new and exciting decade. I believe...do you?

Johnny Baier
Executive Director



Krewe de Banjo
at the
**American Banjo Museum's
Mardi Gras Party**
Saturday, February 22
6-9 pm

MUSIC BY
Jambalaya Jass Band

CASH BAR

MEAL INCLUDED
Lobster Bisque, Red Beans & Rice,
Cajun Shrimp Fondue,
Sausage & Chicken Jambalaya,
Garlic Flat Bread,
Caramel Praline Cheesecake

Members \$25 pp
Non-Members \$30 pp

**Call 405-604-2793 to
purchase tickets**

ABM Announces “BANJO ROOTS” Educational Program

As part of a new educational program, elementary school students will learn to embrace and understand the music, art, and rich history of what has long been considered America’s instrument: THE BANJO! From its humble African roots to mainstream popularity during the Roaring 20s, to the Bluegrass explosion of the recent past, the music and story of the banjo are inextricably woven into America’s history. Now the American Banjo Museum offers an educational program that allows students to visit the museum, attend an interactive performance and even create their own banjos!

Hosted by local TV personality and five-time EMMY© award-winning broadcaster and regional children’s entertainer Lucas Ross, students will participate in a memorable learning experience which includes a live showcase of different banjo playing styles, sing-alongs, and hands-on activities that complement the curriculum. After a video history of the banjo – featuring none other than the world’s most famous amphibian, *Kermit The Frog* along with a host of important figures in American music history, students will have a chance to build and decorate a mock banjo of their own.

“I love any opportunity to share music, the banjo, and education with kids,” said Lucas Ross, ABM’s Outreach and Promotions Coordinator. “The colorful history of the banjo grew along with America - and both stories continue to evolve and intersect...it’s exciting to share this story.”

“As a follow-up to our *Learning Lounge* educational and research facility, the new BANJO ROOTS program represents our first

AMERICAN BANJO MUSEUM PRESENTS
BANJO ROOTS
THE MUSIC, ART, & HISTORY OF
"AMERICA'S INSTRUMENT"

From its humble beginnings to the jazz age and bluegrass explosion, the banjo is woven into American history. Now, the American Banjo Museum offers an education program that allows students to visit the museum, enjoy an interactive concert, create their own banjos and more!

Hosted by OKC TV personality, LUCAS ROSS
With an on-screen appearance by
KERMIT THE FROG!

SCHEDULE YOUR GROUP
405-604-2793
events@americanbanjomuseum.com

Pre-K through Grade 5: Complimentary 1 adult per 5 students.
Grades 6 through 12: Complimentary 1 adult per 10 students.
Please inquire for school assembly/traveling presentation options.

opportunity to introduce the banjo in a meaningful way to school groups,” comments ABM Executive Director, Johnny Baier, adding “We couldn’t be more proud of this exciting new educational opportunity.”

While *Kermit The Frog* has been on display at the museum as part of the current *Jim Henson – Life and Legacy* exhibit, having him participate in the telling of banjo history is something of a dream come true for Lucas Ross. “Kermit was my introduction to the banjo and I’m sure countless others remember him strumming those opening chords of *The Rainbow Connection* while embracing their own fond banjo memories. Now - to appear with him on screen - is literally the highlight of my

career...I mean, how many people get to work with their hero?”

Kermit the Frog’s appearance and inclusion in telling the banjo’s story was made possible by Muppets Studio/Disney and The Jim Henson Legacy. Karen Falk, Vice President of The Jim Henson Legacy, explains “Jim Henson loved banjo music and expressed that through his characters. The American Banjo Museum is the ideal place to demonstrate that appreciation, providing a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Jim’s creative expression. Young audiences served by the museum will no doubt find inspiration from his example.”

Annual Candy Cane Christmas

December 8th marked the third annual Candy Cane Christmas Concert at the American Banjo Museum. It's only fit that the Christmas event be deemed "Candy Cane" as the historical building where the American Banjo Museum is was once home to the Bunte Candy Company.

The Annual Christmas Concert is a community event that benefits the Red Andrews Christmas Dinner which provides toys and meals to over 5,000 in Oklahoma City. During the day free admission was given to those that brought an unwrapped toy to donate to the Red Andrews Christmas Dinner. The Red Andrews Christmas Dinner has been a tradition in Oklahoma City since 1947 and currently provides warm meals and toys to approximately 5,000 on Christmas day.

The afternoon began with the Okie Dokie Banjo Band performing holiday melodies in the front foyer prior to Lucas Ross and Johnny Baier, ABM Executive Director playing Christmas favorites in the event room with holiday favorites and sing-alongs. The afternoon ended with a surprise arrival of Santa and one of his elves getting each child's Christmas list.



What visitors are saying... Facebook Comments

 **Marie Taylor Alcazar** recommends American Banjo Museum. 
October 12

My granddaughter has been dying to go to the museum, and I finally took her today. She LOVED it! We really enjoyed the Muppets/Kermit exhibit.



 **Charlotte Parish Drake** recommends American Banjo Museum. 
October 14

We came from Detroit for the Mumford and Sons show and this was number one on the to do list. We were not disappointed! The collection is incredible! Whether you play or only an admirer you will appreciate the collection and history. Lucas and Cheryl were amazing and we really enjoyed hearing about the museum from them! I even played one! Don't walk..RUN to the American Banjo Museum! You will love it!!



Kermit comes home to the ABM



Lucas Ross (right) with Matt Vogel in the Jim Henson - Life and Legacy exhibit at the American Banjo Museum.

Over the past year and a half, Kermit has become one of our favorite visitors. He arrived with the Muppets' Banjo as part of our award-winning temporary exhibit *Jim Henson - Life and Legacy*, but it looks like he will be sticking around for the long-haul in video form!

Thanks to the gracious collaboration with Heather Henson (daughter of Jim and Jane Henson) and guidance from Karen Falk, Archives Director at The Jim Henson Company, we were able to approach Muppets Inc., owned by Disney, about having Kermit himself make an appearance to greet visitors of the museum.

What started as a simple welcome video turned into having the green-guy himself, appear in our new *Banjo Roots* history video as well! Community Outreach and Promotions Coordinator, Lucas Ross, ran into Matt Vogel at Disney parks and what started as a photo op turned into an invitation to the American Banjo Museum.

Matt Vogel has been with Sesame

Street since 1996 and performing with the Muppets as a director and puppet captain since 2008. Vogel has inherited many beloved characters from Big Bird, to The Count and Kermit the Frog!

"We were on our last day at Disney World" Ross recalls, "and our families were seated together at the Indiana Jones Show. I looked over to my wife and said, "You're sitting next to Big Bird and his family!" Vogel connected with Lucas and mentioned how he'd hope to visit the Henson exhibit in Bricktown the following month led to the perfect opportunity.

After spending a morning touring the museum, Matt started picking around on Lucas' banjo and expressed interest in learning to play. Lucas remembers saying, "Yes, Matt! You're Kermit! Kermit should know how to play the banjo!!"

Over the next few months, Lucas worked with Disney and Jim Lewis who's been writing for Kermit for

years. Together, they fine-tuned a script, and the rest is ABM history. And we made sure Matt got his own Deering Banjo along with Lucas' *Pick-a-Tune* Instructional DVD!

We are grateful for everyone at Disney and the Henson Company for having Jim's permanent thumb print in our museum. Just as young ears first discovered the banjo through the little green frog, new minds will be introduced to the banjo's rich history with Kermit's help.



The Pied Picker Saturday, March 7, 2 pm and Sunday, March 8, 2 pm

Recipient of a 2017 Jim Henson Foundation Family Grant, "The Pied Picker" features David Stephens and his original banjo playing Picker Pete. A forty-five minute show for all ages full of humor and fun as Picker Pete sets off seeking fame and fortune.

Performance included with paid admission. Under 16 free. Adults half price.

Assuring in some Un-Conventional Ways

In our last Newsletter I wrote about assuring the future of the American Banjo Museum. I said, "Assuring the ABM's future requires deeper thought and stronger commitments." I asked, "Are you ready to assure that the ABM will fulfill its mission into the future and beyond?" Fulfilling our mission to Preserve, Present and Promote the banjo in all its forms requires that each of us, as Banjo Players or lovers of the banjo, to take that extra step and support the ABM in ways that assure its continued success.

There are many ways that you can contribute; multi-year major gift commitments, cash donations, monthly recurring credit card donations and estate gifts. All of these methods are viable, greatly appreciated and I strongly encourage each of you to consider and act upon one or more of these strategies to help the ABM continue its efforts. Even if you can't make a great big cash donation, doing all that you can makes a great big difference!

In addition to these conventional methods of gifting to the ABM, a few folks have shown us some new, "un-conventional", approaches to help raise awareness while helping with funding to assure our successful future. We all owe a big THANK YOU to **Ellie Burns, Steve Caddick**, (Hall of Fame 2013), **Bill Bond**, and **Ritchie Dotson**. These forward thinking folks set up Facebook fundraisers for their birthdays. Their fundraiser efforts have shown us a new opportunity to raise funds for the ABM, but also have shown a way to reach their FB friends, people who otherwise might not know about the Museum, its mission and how we contribute

to the Banjo, Music and Arts communities.

Another, un-conventional method these forward thinkers have employed is to have the ABM listed as their favorite charity on Amazon, where a portion of every purchase they make, (on Amazon), is rebated back to the ABM. For this strategy, simply go online and login to Amazon at "**smile.amazon.com**" then select American Banjo Museum as your non profit organization. Thanks guys! That's some great "Out of the Box" thinking!

Both of these programs, as un-conventional as they might seem, are available right now to everyone

who uses Facebook and Amazon. It costs you nothing, so in addition to supporting the American Banjo Museum with your donation, why not do something a little extra and "un-conventional" that helps us reach more folks and adds support to this great cause. For just a few minutes of your time, you can make your donation go even further!

In addition to my regular gift to the ABM, I plan to set up a Birthday fundraiser on Facebook. I sincerely hope, as you read this, that you will join me in all of these efforts. Together we can "assure" the future success of our American Banjo Museum.

Thank you!
Paul Poirier
Board Member



Your donations and memberships enable special exhibits as the upcoming "Women of the Banjo", Pick-A-Tune and Banjo Roots educational programs and aid in preserving the history and heritage of the banjo .

Donate or
Become a Member today !
Call 405-604-2793
or online at
americanbanjomuseum.com

Thank you to all 2019 donors!

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 Steven & Jean Buckley
 Roger & Ellie Burns
 Gim Burton
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 Josephine Capobianco
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 Devin Tower
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 Glenn Peisker
 Paul Poirier
 Geoffrey Rezek
 Lucas Ross
 Niel Shell
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 Tamora Wood

ABM Membership

The American Banjo Museum wishes to recognize and thank new members and those that have renewed their membership the fourth quarter of 2019.

Individual Membership

Gim Burton
 Raymond Cisneros
 Frank Clark
 Silvio Ferretti
 Mark Greathouse
 Chip Henderson
 Allen Holden
 Noah Howard
 Dick Neuman
 David Martin Ogden
 Kevin Priba
 Randy Shumard
 Gerard De Smaele
 Richard Velazquez
 David Wilson
 Tim Sean Youmans

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Teresa M. Black Bradway
 Neil Duresky & Candyce Del Bello
 Bob & Beth Galbraith
 Ray & Alice Jaworski
 Russ & Diane Morton
 Denny & Kathy Overstreet
 Michael & Jane Sigmon

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



9 East Sheridan Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73104



SAVE THE DATE . . . September 10-12, 2020

Upcoming Events...

January

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1 PM
Bluegrass Open Jam

Join other Bluegrass players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1 PM
Celtic Open Jam

Join other players for an Open Celtic Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate.

February

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1 PM
Ukulele Open Jam

Join other ukulele players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 12 PM
Brown Bag-it with Banjos

Bring your sack lunch and enjoy a live performance during your lunch hour.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1 PM
Director's Tour

Join ABM Executive Director, Johnny Baier, for a guided tour of the American Banjo Museum. While this special tour includes everything a typical museum visitor experiences, Baier's focus on special treasures as well as behind the

scenes access will provide a truly unique perspective to our one-of-a-kind facility.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1 PM
Performance

Wayne Cantwell will perform traditional music of the open prairie on banjo, fiddle, and mountain dulcimer. Performance is free with museum admission.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2 PM
Pick-A-Tune with Lucas Ross

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick a Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, by reservation only!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 6 PM
Krewe de Banjo Mardi Gras

Enjoy an evening of jazz and New Orleans style food. Pre-purchase tickets today \$25 members / \$30 non members. Cash Bar.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1 PM
Celtic Open Jam

Join other players for an Open Celtic Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate.

March

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 12 PM
Brown Bag-it with Banjos

Bring your sack lunch and enjoy a live performance during your lunch hour.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2 PM &
SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2 PM**
The Pied Picker

Bring the kids for a fun loving puppet show with puppeteer David Stephens as he showcases his original banjo playing puppets.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1 PM
Performance

Wayne Cantwell will perform traditional music of the open prairie on banjo, fiddle, and mountain dulcimer. Performance is free with museum admission.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2 PM
Pick-A-Tune with Lucas Ross

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick a Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, by reservation only!

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 1 PM
Celtic Open Jam

Join other players for an Open Celtic Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate.

April

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 12 PM
Brown Bag-it with Banjos

Bring your sack lunch and enjoy a live performance during your lunch hour.