

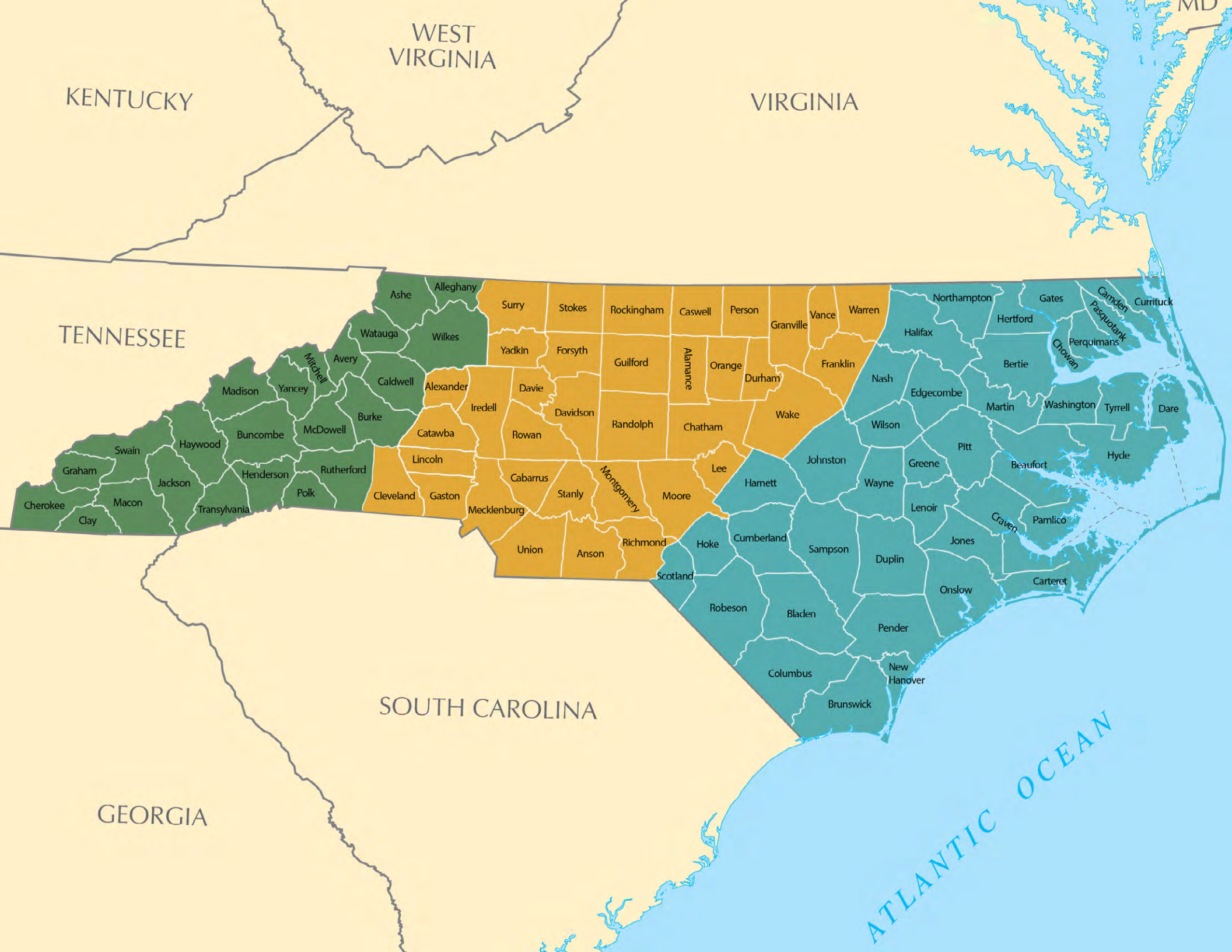
North Carolina
**MILLENNIAL
TRADITIONAL
ARTISTS
DIRECTORY**

*A product of the
Millennial Traditional Artists Project
by the Folklife Program
of the North Carolina Arts Council*



**North
Carolina
Arts
Council**

www.NCArts.org



WEST VIRGINIA

KENTUCKY

VIRGINIA

TENNESSEE

SOUTH CAROLINA

GEORGIA

ATLANTIC OCEAN

- Ashe
- Alleghany
- Surry
- Stokes
- Rockingham
- Caswell
- Person
- Vance
- Warren
- Northampton
- Gates
- Currituck
- Watauga
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- Yadkin
- Forsyth
- Guilford
- Alamance
- Orange
- Durham
- Franklin
- Halifax
- Hertford
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- Tyrrell
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- Iredell
- Rowan
- Chatham
- Wake
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- Edgecombe
- Martin
- Washington
- Tyrrell
- Dare
- Buncombe
- McDowell
- Catawba
- Lincoln
- Cabarrus
- Stanly
- Montgomery
- Moore
- Lee
- Johnston
- Wayne
- Greene
- Pitt
- Beaufort
- Hyde
- Graham
- Swain
- Haywood
- Henderson
- Rutherford
- Cleveland
- Gaston
- Mecklenburg
- Union
- Anson
- Richmond
- Hoke
- Cumberland
- Sampson
- Duplin
- Lenoir
- Jones
- Beaufort
- Hyde
- Cherokee
- Clay
- Macon
- Transylvania
- Polk
- Cleveland
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- Mecklenburg
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- Richmond
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- Sampson
- Duplin
- Lenoir
- Jones
- Beaufort
- Hyde

ABOUT THE DIRECTORY

The Millennial Traditional Artists (MTA) Directory documents next-generation artists working within traditional genres and cultures found across the state of North Carolina.

This directory is the outcome of a three-year initiative by the Folklife Program of the North Carolina Arts Council to identify, serve, and promote the needs of traditional artists at the early stages of their careers. The MTA Project emerged from the need to forge new relationships and methods of communication and service with traditional artists in the age of digital media and self-representation. Although the term "Millennial" formally refers to the generation born between the years of 1981 and 1996, this directory more broadly uses the term to refer to artists emerging in the new millennium.

This generation has been shaped by unprecedented degrees of geographic mobility, social connectivity, and information exchange - experiences which lend them a unique relationship to identity, sense of place, and the relationship between local and popular cultures. Viewing this generation of artists all together highlights which cultural inheritances and influences they are changing and which they are preserving. They are a diverse and dynamic group that defies generalization but are united by a common commitment to the arts and practices created by shared knowledge, values, relationships, and lived experience.

In that spirit this directory takes a broad and inclusive view of traditional arts and the artists who practice them, including both those who have learned time-honored expressive practices within deeply rooted families and those who are forging their communities anew. Many artists featured in the MTA Directory were identified by folklorists working within various cultural communities in North Carolina, or were featured at the Generation Now! NC Folklife Area at the 2017 National Folk Festival. Others self-identified as emerging artists engaged with themes of culture and tradition through participation in surveys, regional workshop gatherings, and collaborative photography sessions organized through the Millennial Traditional Artists Project. While this directory features a sampling of our state's emerging generation of traditional artists, we hope that it will also inspire its readers to discover the many other young artists within their communities who are keeping and creating the cultural arts of North Carolina.

CONNECTING WITH ARTISTS

This directory provides biographies, work samples, and contact information which may have changed over time. We remind users that we cannot guarantee that all the information is completely up-to-date. North Carolina Arts Council staff do not act as managers or agents, so please contact artists directly to ascertain relevant experience and to negotiate bookings and contracts.

The MTA Directory is intended to be a tool for artists, presenters, and others who have an interest in our state's cultural traditions. To help us understand its value, we invite you to share your experiences when you use the directory. Your feedback will help us to improve future iterations of the directory or may spark new strategies for connecting millennial traditional artists with presenters, the general public, and one another.

USING THE DIRECTORY

- » The Directory is arranged alphabetically by last name, although bands and artists performing under stage names are organized alphabetically by first word (e.g. PAT Junior, listed under P, Cypher Univercity listed under C).
- » Hyphenated last names are listed by the first letter of the first last name.
- » Profiles are color-coded by region. Green for artists in the Mountain counties, Yellow for the Piedmont, and Blue for Coastal Plains and Coastal counties.

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Matt Abrams

Tinkers Trading Post

Woodwork | Metalwork | Sculpture | Tool making | Weaponry



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www.etsy.me/2f0GTo9

COASTAL PLAIN

MATT ABRAMS grew up about 40 miles from where he lives now in the Eastern NC, Pitt County town of Pikeville. His father, an electrician by trade, made money selling electrical parts. When he was young, Abrams' father taught him how to fix cars (they never went to the mechanic) and how to use woodworking tools. After high school he decided to go into the military. When his enlistment ended, Abrams found a job working for a North Carolina boat builder, constructing boat interiors until taking up his own creative pursuits as a way to work from home with his two young children. He enjoys working with his hands for both its creative and therapeutic potential.

Abrams has been creating decorative sculptural pieces and functional tools that he sells through Facebook, Etsy and by word of mouth. He began with handworked wooden pieces carved on his grandfather's pocketknife, and later took up metalwork. To learn more about wood and metal, he talked to elders he met at craft festivals - the best way to learn, he says, although he has also educated himself through the Internet. Constructing his own forge has allowed him to expand into blacksmithing and weapons-making. He creates both functional tools and decorative art objects out of handmade and upcycled materials, foraging wood from the forest around his home. Abrams writes, "I live in a lowlands area with many young saplings and vines in the undergrowth. This allows for a wide variety of soft and hard woods along with stunning naturally twisted trees and large beautiful burl wood knots. My works space consists of two big pecan logs out by my wood pile and a crowded table in a small open air garage. At night after my children go to bed, I do the detail work inside with a beginner's wood carving set and my granddad's pocket knife."

AVAILABILITY

Matt Abrams runs Tinkers Trading Post, offering not only craft pieces like knives, metal sculptures, and walking sticks, but also services from knife sharpening to automobile maintenance.

Liana Adrong

Montagnard Dega Association | Montagnard American Organization
Community organizing | Social work | Montagnard dance



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"Montagnard American Organization"

<http://bit.ly/2kNfxHW>

PIEDMONT

LIANA ADRONG is a social worker at the Montagnard Dega Association and a liaison for Guilford County's Montagnard (French for "mountain people") community. Now surpassing 9,000 people, this is the largest Montagnard population outside of Southeast Asia. Adrong was born in Vietnam and moved to Greensboro in 1996 when she was 13. Her family, like so many others, were resettled as refugees as a result of the Vietnam War. U.S. Special Forces recruited members of this ethnic minority group to fight against the Viet Cong. In reparation, after the Fall of Saigon in 1975, the US granted special status to Montagnards and Greensboro, NC, welcomed this new community. As a teenager, Adrong helped her parents adjust by serving as their translator, taking them to appointments, checking mail, even writing checks.

While earning her degree in social work from UNC-Greensboro, Adrong and other students established the Montagnard-American Organization with guidance from UNC-G's Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC) in 2005. With the mission to engage young people and promote higher education and cultural preservation, the group went on to merge with the like-minded Montagnard Dega Association (MDA) in 2016. In her role as administrative coordinator and vocational instructor, Adrong now serves Greensboro's refugee population through social services, employment, and hands-on training. She is also an ambassador for her community—she both educates others on Montagnard identity and works to create opportunities for Montagnard youth to learn about their own cultural traditions. "If you were born here, or came here at a very young age, you don't remember a lot about our traditions or culture, or what our parents gave up in bringing us here," she explains.

Adrong regularly organizes Montagnard performances for area festivals and school presentations, celebrations for high school and college graduates, and cultural classes for the community. "While we're learning weaving," she says, "our instructors always talk amongst each other. We are also learning about our culture and our background." One of her proudest recent accomplishments is helping MDA publish a children's book in English, Rhade, and Koho (Montagnard languages). She hopes to create more opportunities to teach Guilford County's Montagnard youth these native languages.

AVAILABILITY

Liana Adrong organizes Montagnard performances for area festivals and school presentations, celebration events for high school and college graduates, and cultural classes for the community.

Wesley Albertson

Rougemont Forge
Bladesmithing



Rougemont, Durham County, NC

Instagram: @rougemont_forge

www.facebook.com/rougemontforge

www.etsy.com/shop/RougemontForge

PIEDMONT

For Rougemont bladesmith **WESLEY ALBERTSON**, the end result is all that matters. While he forges his blades by hand, he insists the hand-forged process is "not a virtue that should be held up above everything else." The ultimate virtue lies in the flow of the lines, the achievement of craftsmanship accomplished through the process. Albertson's knives range from choppers to puukos, friction folders to seax. Uniting the variety of forms is a commitment to leaving a forge-finish on every blade, creating a striking contrast between a bright, smooth edge and a dark, textured spine. This mesmerizing effect is intended to show that, yes, this blade was hammered and shaped by hand. But, as Albertson would insist, this effect is only achieved by a bladesmith dedicated to the mastery of the process.

Albertson's process of becoming a bladesmith began with an early infatuation with metalworking: "There is something that kind of feels natural about shaping iron." When he acquired an old riveter's forge, he soon broke it, but the experience emboldened his curiosity about blacksmithing. When his father introduced him to a local blacksmith named Robert Timberlake in 2014, Albertson's career truly began.

Apprenticing under Timberlake, Albertson quickly advanced in his craft, attending regional blacksmith meetings and showcasing his works on social media. The quality of his knives attracted the attention of producers of the History Channel's bladesmith show *Forged in Fire*, which featured Albertson and Timberlake in the very first Master & Apprentice episode. In addition, the North Carolina affiliate of the Artist Blacksmith's Association of North America awarded Albertson the W. Dean Taylor Memorial Scholarship, that supports opportunities to pursue blacksmithing classes and workshops.

The mentorship of Timberlake and the North Carolina blacksmithing community has impressed upon Albertson a desire not only to refine his craft but to share it. Though still young, he hopes eventually to open up a store in downtown Durham where he would offer lessons in blacksmithing and invite fellow craftsmen to lead demonstrations.

AVAILABILITY

Wesley Albertson sells his knives and accepts commissions through his Etsy page, Rougemont Forge.

Ayanna Albertson

Spoken word



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"Mourning People"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_37fDxHxp1M

"Suicide"

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8A0jn46oMTY&t=79s>

PIEDMONT

In spoken word, there are voices that call out to a room, and there are voices that bring a room to it. **AYANNA ALBERTSON**'s voice is the latter. The melodic runs of gospel and percussive pulse of rap blend into the rhythms of her words. Her poem "Mourning People" begins with a slowed-down sample of John Legend's "Glory." Eyes closed, singing, Albertson conjures a paradise where all burdens are laid down. Then, shifting into the poem, she lays her burdens at the altar, ascending to a crescendo praising how Black communities "turn funerals into homegoing celebrations / a declaration that not even death can steal [their] joy."

Born in Goldsboro, NC, Albertson attended Oakwood University in Huntsville, Ala. There, she joined the Art n' Soul collective with whom she honed her craft. In November 2016, after returning to NC, she saw a Facebook ad for the Jambalaya Soul Slam's Women of the World Poetry Slam qualifier. She decided to compete. She won. It was her first poetry slam. A whirlwind of success followed. She's been a two-time Bull City Grand Slam champion and placed 19th in the world among women poets. All the while, she has pursued a career in journalism, contributing to digital publications such as Bustle, Ravishly and ChangeWire.

A self-proclaimed "Artrepreneur," Albertson has channeled her drive for art and business into "Passion Over Popularity," the umbrella brand for her various multimedia projects. For her, poetry slam is as much an art form as it is a platform, and what she wishes to do with it is this: "to impact, to empower, and to inspire."

AVAILABILITY

Ayanna Albertson is available for solo performances that can be tailored for religious or secular events. In addition, she is interested in collaborations for her podcast "Passion Over Popularity the Podcast," also known as "POPcast," and is available for public speaking engagements.

Shirlette Ammons

Hip-hop | Rock | R&B | Spoken word | Film | Activism



Durham, Durham County, NC

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PIEDMONT

"My first performance was for a cornfield," remembers poet-musician **SHIRLETTE AMMONS**. "We imagined [it] looked like an arena of people." Though a charming childhood memory, Ammons' cornfield concert reflects the radical imagination she brings to the world around her. Growing up Black and queer in rural Beaufort, the multi-disciplinary artist records music that combines Hip Hop, Rock, R&B, and Spoken Word. Through rejecting the boundaries of genre, Ammons strives to not only create sounds no one has heard before, but to also tell stories no one has yet listened to.

Now based in Durham, Ammons has produced a diverse resume united by her love to "blend and bend things" conceptually. Her first solo album, *Twilight For Gladys Bentley* (2012), was a sonic "re-imagining" of Gladys Bentley, 1920s lesbian blues-singer who defied gender norms by performing in men's attire. Similarly, Ammons' sophomore album, *Language Barrier* (2016), challenged the ways the language of gender and genre imposed limitations on the work and art of people's lives, finding possibilities through collaborations with artists like German rapper Sookee and North Carolina indie folk singer M.C. Taylor (*Hiss Golden Messenger*).

A recipient of an N.C. Arts Council Artist Fellowship, Ammons remains dedicated to rural communities like her own. "Not until I left rural North Carolina did I understand the beauty and the importance of the stories within me that were passed down to me. . . .If kids in Beaufort or Mount Olive are given a camera, I'm afraid for the world. Their image of what their world is, is long overdue."

AVAILABILITY

As a solo artist, Ammons is available for booking at festivals, clubs, music halls, and other concert spaces. In addition, she has experience in contributing to print publications, panels, and workshops.

Carley Arrowood

Bluegrass | Singer-songwriter | Gospel



Union Mills, Rutherford County, NC

(828) 429-2379

banjogirl96@gmail.com

Instagram: @carleyarrowoodmusic

www.facebook.com/carleyarrowoodmusic

"Jesus Drive The Train"

<https://youtu.be/fN4UoBvgGEI>

Original fiddle tune - "Double Sunset"

<https://youtu.be/vQhB0n6ZzVY>

MOUNTAINS

CARLEY ARROWOOD is a bluegrass musician, composer of bluegrass and gospel songs, and fiddle teacher. Growing up in Rutherford County, NC, she was inspired early in life by the sounds of Appalachian fiddle music. Being homeschooled, Arrowood's family carved time for lessons and music. She started taking violin lessons as a young child, after seeing local fiddler, Todd Elliott, put on a show for her 4-H group. While she studied violin and rose to first chair of the Hendersonville youth symphony, she had a strong preference for learning by ear and was also learning traditional fiddling directly from local bluegrass musicians. By her teens, she was an accomplished fiddler, playing in area bands and competing in prestigious fiddle contests. With her sister Autumn and her cousin Katie McEntire, she formed the group Carolina Jasmine and went on to win the Jr. Bluegrass Band competition at Fiddlers Grove. They were pronounced the first all-girl band to win the Junior Band Championship in the festival's then-85-year history.

Arrowood has since garnered a long list of accolades. She has won the fiddle contests at the North Carolina Mountain State Fair, Ellenboro Fiddlers' & Bluegrass Convention, and the Union Grove Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention. For three years she was a member of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA)'s Kids on Bluegrass program, and received IBMA's Momentum Award for Instrumentalist of the Year in 2017. In 2018, Carley returned to Fiddler's Grove after six years and competed in Senior Bluegrass fiddle. She won that category, which gave her a slot in the fiddle-off. She was then named Fiddler of the Festival, as well as Jammer of the Festival in the Hot Licks competition. In 2019 she was invited to compete at the FreshGrass Festival Fiddle Competition in North Adams, Mass.

Since 2018, she has played with Darin and Brooke Aldridge, one of bluegrass's most acclaimed duos and North Carolinians themselves. In the Aldridges' band, Arrowood has played at the Grand Ole Opry and toured in Europe. When not on the road, she teaches fiddle and writes original songs. Arrowood also performs with her boyfriend, Daniel Thraikill, singing and playing for church events and for weddings.

AVAILABILITY

Carley Arrowood will consider requests for performances and lessons on the fiddle.

Presley Barker

Singer-songwriter | Flatpicking guitar



Traphill, Wilkes County, NC

(336) 902-0931

pbarker@wilkes.net

www.facebook.com/presleybarkermusic

"Black Mountain Rag" with Wayne Henderson

<https://youtu.be/zx79ZWH7-ns>

"Your Cheatin' Heart"

<http://bit.ly/2krm7b9>

MOUNTAINS

PRESLEY BARKER began to learn the guitar when he was seven years old, and he sounds like someone who's been playing for much longer. He lives not far from Doc Watson's North Carolina mountain home, and was exposed to traditional music and dancing early on by his family. Doc Watson is a longtime hero who inspires Presley's performances.

Also deeply influential in Barker's development as a guitarist are his teachers and mentors, who include such stars of mountain flatpicking as Steve Lewis, Wayne Henderson, and Bryan Sutton. He is an outstanding bluegrass singer too. Presley has already achieved goals for which many musicians strive for many years. He has recorded an album (when only 10 years old), played at the Grand Ole Opry, and won first place in the adult division of the Galax, Virginia, Old Fiddlers' Convention – twice. He has also appeared on stage with Ricky Skaggs, and opened for Marty Stuart. In 2017, Barker won the prestigious Wayne C Henderson Guitar Championship.

Barker keeps up a busy performance schedule, appearing in concert throughout western North Carolina and beyond. He continues to play and sing regularly at his local church.

AVAILABILITY

Presley Barker will consider performance invitations.

Elia Bizzarri

Windsor chairs



Hillsborough, Orange County, NC

(919) 732-3321

elia@handtoolwoodworking.com

www.handtoolwoodworking.com

PIEDMONT

To identify the allure of an **ELIA BIZZARRI** Windsor chair, take a moment to delight in its form, and imagine how it could accommodate—no, embrace—your own. The lithe curve of the back, the strong flex of the spindles, the subtle concave of the seat—a Bizzarri chair feels ready to catch the tired and stiff like a good friend at the end of a long day. A human quality characterizes the piece. That's because a profoundly human effort went into its making. Declining the assistance of anything powered by a plug, Bizzarri applies techniques and tools that have persisted for hundreds of years. He dries his wood by air or kiln. He utilizes antique drawknives. He builds by hand. The construction of a Bizzarri chair is less a process than a story. When it arrives at the doorstep of a customer, sometimes delivered by the artist himself, a Bizzarri chair seems to have already lived a full life, a good life.

Bizzarri committed to a life of chairmaking early. At seventeen, Bizzarri began an apprenticeship under Curtis Buchanan, a master Windsor chairmaking based in Jonesborough, Tennessee. "Ours was a relationship built on trust," Bizzarri recalls. "Not on words or papers." Working with Buchanan, Bizzarri developed his skills with hand tools and knowledge of how the quality of various wood—maple, poplar, hickory, and oak—informs each part of the Windsor. Bizzarri's time with Buchanan prepared him for a decorated career as a craftsman. He has demonstrated techniques on Roy Underhill's PBS series *The Woodwright's Shop*; showcased pieces at the North Carolina Museum of Art, the Governor's Mansion, and Piedmont Craftsmen Guild; and been featured in the *Independent Weekly*, *Woodcraft Magazine*, and other publications. In 2013, after a decade of practicing his craft, Bizzarri opened his custom-designed shop in Hillsborough.

With each chair he makes, Bizzarri writes a short story. Delivered to the customer, these brief tales are—to use Bizzarri's words—"a personal memento of the chairmaking process, a moment in the chair's birth, preserved in words." Like the chairs that inspire them, the short stories reveal Bizzarri's keen awareness that his pieces don't just become part of a room. They become part of a life.

AVAILABILITY

Elia Bizzarri accepts commissions to make personalized chairs. Bizzarri is available to teach chairmaking in a variety of settings, whether it's one-on-one or in a workshop.

Lejuane “El’Ja” Bowens

Spoken word



Photo: Will Warasila

Fayetteville, Cumberland County, NC

(910) 583-3360

poetrynmotionnc@gmail.com

poetrynmotionnc.vistaprintdigital.com

Instagram and Twitter: @eljapoetry

“Left, Right”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrylx16N5mk

COASTAL PLAIN

Purpose over popularity. These words inhabit the work and life of spoken word poet **LEJUANE “EL’JA” BOWENS**. Charged with a frenetic energy and down-to-earth, let-me-tell-you-something delivery, Bowens’ performances span a vast emotional territory. In one poem, he revels in the joy of being a black nerd, praising Japanese video games and Marvel superheroes. In another, he weaves together soldier stories, his own and others, to de-stigmatize PTSD. Regardless of subject, each piece reveals Bowens’ bent as a motivational speaker, his determination to uplift his audiences through the art that lifted his spirit out of rough times.

Born in Detroit, Bowens joined the United States Army in 2000. During his six years of service, including two deployments to Iraq, El’Ja began to commit his thoughts to paper. In 2005, at the urging of a friend, Bowens posted several poems online. The positive feedback opened his eyes: poetry was his calling. In 2014, Bowens became the first poet to win three Grand Slam Finals in three cities across North Carolina. With the Bull City Slam Team, Bowens won the 22nd Southern Fried Poetry Slam, and was nominated for Spoken Word Artist of the Year at the 5th Annual National Poetry Awards in 2015. A featured poet at All Def Poetry, a YouTube channel presented by hip hop legend Russell Simmons of Def Jam Records fame, he has published two books of poetry, *So Many Things to Say* (2007) and *Anywhere ... But Here* (2017). At home, Bowens has worked to help build Fayetteville’s poetry scene, organizing the annual Southeastern Regional NC Poetry Festival.

One of Bowen’s poems reads, “I’ve met too many insomniacs that decided they no longer wanted to dream.” Working either on stage or in the community, Bowens realizes that a poem’s true power is its capacity to remind us to dream. “[But] my dreams are what I want to bring to life. There’s no giving up on them.”

AVAILABILITY

El’Ja Bowens is available for solo spoken word sets, event-hosting, and motivational speaking engagements. In addition, he can organize, coordinate, and run Nerd Slams for conferences and conventions.

Kelley Breiding

Kelley & The Cowboys | Crooked Road Ramblers
Old-time | Country | Western swing



Crumpler, Ashe County, NC

(336) 755-1771

kellybreiding@hotmail.com

kelleyandthecowboys.com

"Huntin' Season"

<https://youtu.be/4Z-jPlaYIXw>

"Bury Me Beneath the Willow"

<https://youtu.be/3-v7DgHbQSk>

MOUNTAINS

KELLEY BREIDING is one of today's leading banjo players in the famous Round Peak style of NC and VA. She is also an accomplished country and Western swing musician. Though she grew up playing the piano, it was in her teens that the NC native first took up the guitar, which signaled the beginning of her passion for old-time and other styles of country music.

Learning banjo while she was in college at Western Carolina University, Breiding spent a great deal of time with the Round Peak musicians of the Mount Airy area. She eventually moved to Mount Airy, and was part of the revival of the well-known Round Peak band Backstep. Breiding also made a name for herself at music festivals by winning numerous banjo contests. In addition to the banjo, she is accomplished in playing guitar, bass, and fiddle.

Now living in Ashe County, Breiding plays with two other leading old-time bands, Spencer Branch and the Crooked Road Ramblers. As the leader of Kelley and the Cowboys, she has been performing classic country, Western swing, and rockabilly since 2005, a style that she has said allows her to express herself differently than she does with old-time music. *The Charlotte Observer* has written, "The deep and sultry vocals of singer Kelley Breiding add a unique touch to a genre that doesn't often find female singers."

In addition to performing with three bands and solo, Kelley teaches lessons and workshops in old-time banjo.

AVAILABILITY

Kelley Breiding will consider invitations for performances with the Crooked Road Ramblers, Spencer Branch, and Kelley and the Cowboys, as well as lesson and workshop requests.

Chad Brown

Pottery



Seagrove, Randolph County, NC

(910) 571-1691

chadcameronbrown@gmail.com

www.chadbrownpottery.com

www.etsy.com/shop/ChadCBrownPottery

PIEDMONT

CHAD BROWN makes masterful wood-fired pottery inspired by four generations of family tradition in Seagrove, NC's renowned pottery community. The confidence and understatement of his pots reflect lifelong immersion in the craft. One of his earliest memories is of playing in the studio of master potters Dot and Walter Auman. Brown recalls, "Dot told Momma that I should be a potter, since I stayed so interested all day long."

Brown never let his ties to Seagrove ebb. After college, he spent a decade in Seagrove's informal journeyman apprenticeship system as a production thrower for numerous potteries. Brown struck out on his own in 2010, setting up shop near the kiln site of his great-great-grandfather, William Henry Criscoe. This setting is revered in Moore County history; Criscoe's original cabin workshop resides in the Smithsonian. Brown channels that legacy into his work while earning accolades for his innovations on tradition, which include perfectly formed large-scale pots.

"I enjoy making wood-fired alkaline-glazed and salted pots," says Brown. "Many of the shapes that I make today are like the ones that my grandfather and great-great-grandfather made. I see pots in two ways: shape and surface. The shapes are designed by me and the surfaces are decorated by fire. Occasionally the best shape and the best surface find each other. This is my forever pursuit."

AVAILABILITY

Chad Brown is available to sell, display, and demonstrate at festivals and craft fairs.

The Burnett Sisters

Kathleen and Anissa Burnett
Bluegrass | Old-time | Gospel | Folk



Boone, Watauga County, NC
(828) 406-4891

www.burnettsistersband.com
[facebook.com/theburnettsistersband](https://www.facebook.com/theburnettsistersband)

"Ballad of a Lonely Woman"
<https://youtu.be/XD6Z1i10T4U>

"Deer Walk"
<https://youtu.be/MxI7PCsNtxE>

KATHLEEN AND ANISSA BURNETT, natives of Boone, NC, bring to audiences a repertoire of acoustic bluegrass, folk, and old-time music through performances with a number of professional bands across the tri-state region of NC, Tenn., and VA. Both sisters have been trained in the renowned Bluegrass, Old-time, and Country Music Program at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), and have played with ETSU's old-time pride band The Old-time Ramblers, which has appeared on Tim White's *Song of the Mountains* television program.

The sisters also play with younger siblings and Opry performer Colin Ray in The Burnett Sisters Band, which has played at numerous festivals and venues such as Merlefest, IBMA, and Dollywood's Bluegrass and Barbecue Festival. Additionally, they play with the trio High Country Strings, at venues which include Anakeesta Resort and Dolly Parton's Dream More Resort in Gatlinburg, Tenn. Both sisters, multi-instrumentalists and vocalists, previously performed with the local award-winning old-time band Strictly Strings. Kathleen and Anissa appear with former band mate Willow Dillon in an episode of David Holt's *State Of Music* on PBS.

Their haunting vocal harmonies and tight folk instrumentals reflect the local mountain traditions of old-time and roots music, which they have been playing since the age of four. Prizewinning banjo player, guitarist, fiddler, and singer Joe Newberry has said, "The Burnett Sisters - Anissa and Kathleen - are some of North Carolina's finest young musicians. They honor the past, and at the same time show us the future of traditional music."

AVAILABILITY

The Burnett Sisters will consider performance invitations.

Nathan Bush

Cherokee plant lore | Cherokee metalwork | Cherokee basketry



Robbinsville, Graham County, NC | Cherokee, Qualla Boundary, NC

(828) 735-9687

cherokeebush@hotmail.com

MOUNTAINS

Cherokee Historical Association Program Coordinator **NATHAN BUSH** grew up in the Snowbird Community. His family has deep roots in Cherokee history and culture. The great-great-grandson of Wachacha (an important figure in 19th-century Cherokee history, and Junaluska's brother), Bush was steeped in Cherokee lore as he grew up. His grandparents and mother shared with him their own deep knowledge of plant lore, taking him out into the woods with them to show him which plants had medicinal qualities or were food sources. His mother taught him to memorize plants and their uses, and how to prepare them, in case a situation should ever arise in which he needed the knowledge to survive. About the importance of learning from older members of one's family and community, Bush says, "It about takes a lifetime to learn these things. That's what elders are so good for."

Through his work with the Oconaluftee Indian Village and the Cherokee Historical Association, Nathan Bush shares that heritage with visitors. He also operates a forge at the village, specializing in copper work and teaching students and coworkers elements of metalwork. "Copper," he points out, "is also medicine." In his role as an educator and presenter, Bush represents generations of Cherokee people who have learned to care for themselves and their families with the medicine of the natural world.

AVAILABILITY

Nathan Bush will consider invitations to demonstrate, present, and teach Cherokee crafts and plant lore.

Jalessa Cade

Gospel vocals



Dunn, Harnett County, NC

(910) 214-0125

jalessacade@icloud.com

www.facebook.com/jalessa.cade

"Night Out With Jalessa Cade"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRo59rnerac

COASTAL PLAIN

JALESSA (pronounced Juh-LEE-sa) **CADE'S** music teachers taught her that "When you're singing, you have to believe what you're singing. I can tell you, 'Mary had a little lamb,' but if I don't believe it, then Mary didn't have a little lamb." Cade performs both as a solo vocalist and as a member of the praise and worship band BB & Company. When she sings, she draws upon the beliefs gained from her Christian faith and from her life experiences to encourage and uplift audiences.

The Dunn native's musical talent was fostered at an early age by her family and teachers. She comes from a singing family, and her parents, both pastors, gave her "free rein" to explore the genres of music—from gospel to jazz and blues, to pop and R&B—that caught her ear.

As a solo artist Cade gives concerts and sings at church and memorial services. She has also performed competitively, trying out—and progressing through several levels of auditions—for American Idol, and with fellow NC artists in the Carolina's Best competition. Since 2014 she has been a member of BB & Company, a Dunn-based praise and worship band. Speaking of her career goals, Cade says, "I've always been raised [to believe that] it's good to be talented and it's good to be anointed, but you have to be effective...Are you just singing just to be singing?...I just want God to be pleased with my sacrifice, and that is music."

AVAILABILITY

Jalessa Cade will consider performance invitations.

Josh Campbell

Old-time banjo



Greenville, Pitt County, NC

(704) 301-1968

JccOldTime23@gmail.com

COASTAL PLAIN

JOSH CAMPBELL brings old-time fiddle tunes of the Appalachian region to the eastern plains of NC. He can be found at various open mic events in the Greenville area, performing traditional ballads with banjo and voice.

Campbell came from a public-school band background in trumpet and jazz. When his grandfather promised him his old banjo if he could learn how to play it, Campbell took up the challenge and taught himself. He transitioned to old-time fiddle tunes while living in Charlotte under the instruction of a mentor who was himself a student of Tommy Jarrell, Surry County's legendary fiddler from the Round Top region. Thrust onstage, Josh learned the tunes through immersion while gigging in the Charlotte area. After a few years, he chose to continue his musical education at East Carolina University, picking up the guitar and composition when banjo wasn't an option for study in the School of Music. He has remained in the Greenville area despite the lack of a prevalent old-time scene, teaching banjo, guitar, and passing on his knowledge of old-time fiddle tunes to his students.

AVAILABILITY

Josh Campbell will consider performance and workshop invitations.

Cane Mill Road

Bluegrass



Deep Gap, Watauga County, NC

(828) 964-2355
canemillroad@gmail.com

canemillroad.com

YouTube Channel
<http://bit.ly/2IZ3vLM>

MOUNTAINS

CANE MILL ROAD's origins are in a friendship between two young musicians from northwestern NC. Multi-instrumentalist Liam Purcell is from Deep Gap, home of National Heritage Fellow and traditional music legend Doc Watson; banjo player Trajan "Tray" Wellington is from Wilkes and Ashe counties, regions with equally rich musical traditions. Both Liam and Tray became interested in mountain music when they were very young. Liam learned fiddle, guitar, mandolin, and banjo in the Watauga Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program. Tray learned banjo and guitar in his school's Mountain Music Club. He has said that the first time he heard live banjo music, he knew that was the instrument that he wanted to play.

The two North Carolinians are joined in Cane Mill Road by guitarist and singer Casey Lewis, a native of Southwest Virginia, and Utah-raised bass player Hudson Bosworth. Together, the four play a style of bluegrass music that explores progressive paths while remaining rooted in the traditional music of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Their music began to draw acclaim from the very beginning. Their first two albums both rose to the Billboard Bluegrass charts, and 2018 saw the band nominated for the International Bluegrass Music Association's (IBMA) Momentum Award for Band of the Year, and Tray Wellington for a Momentum Instrumentalist of the Year Award.

When not on the road touring, some of Cane Mill Road's members offer instruction to rising members of the traditional music community.

AVAILABILITY

Cane Mill Road will consider performance invitations, and the individual members are on occasion available for music lessons.

Johnny Lee Chapman III

Spoken word



Photo: 8-Bit Photography

Fuquay-Varina, Wake County, NC

(919) 609-4212

chapmajl17@gmail.com

www.thegoldenmoment.net

YouTube Channel

<http://bit.ly/2lZ6qUD>

PIEDMONT

If poems are like plots, then "the poet is the introduction to the story," says spoken word artist **JOHNNY LEE CHAPMAN III**. "The middle and the end? That depends upon the audience." That's how a Chapman performance begins: introducing odd, novel ways of seeing our familiar world, and offering counter-narratives that call audiences to respond with new perspectives of themselves and others.

After years of sharing his poems quietly on his private social media, Chapman attended his first open-mic during his senior year at UNC-Chapel Hill, fresh from a cookout, smelling of smoke and charcoal as he launched into "Alcoholics Anonymous," a poem about Chapman's own journey with addiction. After having written by and for himself for so long, this first experience with the mic ushered the young Fuquay Varina poet into the larger Carolina spoken word community. Ebony Reader/Onyx Theater, the spoken word division of UNC's Black Student Movement, accepted him into his troupe, where he learned to collaborate, workshop, and perform alongside other poets. "I found a family of writers who really gave me a chance to grow, to nurture, to experiment," he remembers. "If I was still [writing on my own], I'd probably be a closet recluse and just have all these works built up just to myself."

Nothing about Chapman or his work is reclusive now. He pursues opportunities to perform across the state—at cafes, slams, open-mics, and museums, all while maintaining a career as a professional dental hygienist. As his state's spoken word community has embraced him, he has embraced his role as a storyteller. "Who's in charge? The storyteller. The storyteller is the one relaying history. They are the one getting the imagination working," says Chapman. "I'm coming into this position where it's like . . . You are someone who's going to be able to talk about the history of North Carolina. Or the history of what it's like growing up black in America."

AVAILABILITY

Johnny Lee Chapman III will consider performance and speaking invitations.

Lynda Charles

Poetry



Photo: Denise Allen

Durham, Durham County, NC
lyn_charles14@hotmail.com

PIEDMONT

"As a writer, I have the ability to manifest whatever I desire to as long as I put pen and paper together." **LYNDA CHARLES**, 29, is the recently published author of *Glow*, a meditation on how we experience love in its myriad phases. Charles has similarly experienced different phases of writing throughout her life. She began journaling when she was nine years old, and recalls, "I wrote down whatever I was feeling at the time. It was a way of expressing myself." She then stopped writing upon entering graduate school at UNC Greensboro, where she studied gerontology (the study of aging). "I didn't write in grad school because I became secure in who I was. I could articulate myself as a direct and up-front person." But the hiatus did not last and Charles found her back back to the written word.

Charles has been careful to separate her work life from her writing life, which she considers the more "raw form" of herself. She notes that her writing has evolved since she was young. No longer does she write to express unarticulated emotion, but rather to reflect upon these emotions. Much like the phases of love she describes in *Glow*—falling in love, the in-between moments, the break-ups, and the process of recovery—Charles' relationship to writing has been anything but static. "Writing plays a critical role in my life as it is an extension of who I am and embedded into my DNA...this gift has empowered me and has caused me to become a force to be reckoned with—both personally and professionally."

AVAILABILITY

Lynda Charles will consider invitations for speaking engagements and workshops.

Lillian Chase

Old-time | Fiddle



Buncombe County, NC

(828) 337-0882 (Laura Chase, Lillian's mother)

lillianchasefiddle@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/lillianchasefiddle

"Back Up and Push" with Will Hart

https://youtu.be/_FqOKtbcCCU

LILLIAN CHASE is the descendant of six generations who have lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains, so it's natural that she would become a steward of Appalachian tradition. From the age of four she knew that she wanted to be a fiddler, and she began to learn the instrument when she was six years old. A student of master fiddler and North Carolina Heritage Award recipient Arvil Freeman, Chase is part of a distinguished lineage of Asheville-area fiddlers. She is also accomplished as a classical violinist.

Chase plays frequently for concerts, in fiddle contests, and for other events in Western North Carolina and beyond. She released her first album, *Playing Favorites* in 2017. That same year, she received the Young Artist of the Year Award from the Acadia School of Traditional Music and Arts in Maine. She has appeared on stage with such leading fiddlers as Bobby Hicks, April Verch, Arvil Freeman, and Bruce Molsky.

AVAILABILITY

Lillian Chase will consider invitations for performances. Contact Laura Chase to discuss availability.

Chócala

Bomba y plena | Latin fusion | Electronic music



Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, NC

chocalamusic@gmail.com

www.chocalamusic.bandcamp.com

www.facebook.com/chocalamusic

PIEDMONT

Charlotte-based **CHÓCALA** (the Spanish word for "high five") was born out of the sonic childhood landscapes of siblings Liza and Claudio Ortiz. The children of a Puerto Rican mother and Venezuelan father, who are both orthodox Jews, they spent their earliest years moving from Puerto Rico, where Claudio was born, to Gainesville, Fla., Liza's birthplace, and later to Charlotte, NC. The Ortiz siblings inherited the musical traditions of all their cultural backgrounds: salsa and merengue, their parents Israeli and Middle Eastern records, the Afro-Caribbean percussion of Puerto Rican bomba y plena, and the ska and punk bands of the 2000s.

"In Puerto Rican households, wherever you are on the planet, you get together and play bomba y plena," Claudio Ortiz says. "That's a big memory for me — my sister and me, sitting around, playing and dancing and singing together, and using these percussion instruments. And if there weren't enough percussion instruments to go around, we'd use pots and pans and cheese graters and forks, or just whatever... There's a resourcefulness to plena and bomba, which taught me a lesson early on — that whatever sound I want to make, it doesn't necessarily matter what instrument I'm playing it on."

The Ortiz siblings' first musical collaboration was as the band Patabamba, which was rearranged as Chócala in 2017 with Liza on keyboards and vocals, Claudio on bass and percussion, Davey Blackburn on percussion, and Michael Anderson and saxophone. They released their first album *en[demo]niá* in late 2017 with a more experimental, adventurous sound, big enough to accommodate the diversity of the band members' musical influences. Through Chócala, Liza began to discover herself as a songwriter in both English and Spanish, after overcoming her worries about mastering the grammar of her native tongue and finding her expressive multilingual groove. Today Chócala is a vibrant, joyful, and complex, reverent of its traditions while remaining liberated from creative boundaries. They released their self-titled full length album *Chócala* in 2019.

AVAILABILITY

Chócala will consider invitations for performances and workshops.

Brandy Clements

Chair caning



Asheville, Buncombe County, NC

(828) 707-4553

silverriverchairs@gmail.com

www.silverriverchairs.com

Instagram: [@silverriverchairs](https://www.instagram.com/silverriverchairs)

MOUNTAINS

"Sometimes people cry when they pick up their chairs," says **BRANDY CLEMENTS**, fourth-generation chair caner and owner of Silver River Center For Chair Caning in the River Arts District of Asheville. Silver River's patrons come from near and far—down the street, across the globe. Chairs arrive with scarred legs, torn seats. Yet, before describing the chair's material, nearly every patron launches into its history: this was someone's "time out" chair growing up; this chair belonged to a colonel one hundred years ago.

A self-identified "chair nerd," Clements is an expert caner not just because she has invested years repairing seats, researching the history of seat weaving, and lecturing on the differences between fiber rush, shaker tape, and Danish Cord. She also understands that chairs occupy a special place in people's lives. "I always indulge the person," she explains. "If they say this is my great-aunt's chair, I'd say, 'What's her name?'"

Clements's relationship with chairs begins with family. Though caning goes back as far as her grandmother, Clements did not begin learning the trade until her late twenties. Her Aunt Linda volunteered to teach her.

Through the years, Clements has forged an impressive career as an artist, restoration expert, teacher, and business owner. In 2014, alongside her partner Dave Klinger, Clements opened the Silver River Center for Chair Caning, the nation's only chair caning school and museum. A member of the Southern Highlands Craft Guild, Clements has been featured on UNC-TV, *Carolina Home and Garden*, *American Craft Magazine*, and more.

The internet connected her to an international seat-weaver community, so Clements bristles at the notion caning is a lost or dying art. Caning has persisted throughout history, and from South America to South Carolina, new generations of craftspeople have taken up the trade. Whether she is weaving or teaching, Clements is dedicated to supporting those new generations. "We're proud to be stewards of these chairs," she says.

AVAILABILITY

In addition to commissions for chair restoration, Clements welcomes opportunities to lecture and host workshops on the history of chair caning. Silver River also offers courses in caning and seat weaving.

Gabe Crow

Cherokee basketry | Cherokee pottery



Cherokee, Qualla Boundary, NC

(828) 736-5732

gabecrow.89@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/GTCbasketry/

MOUNTAINS

GABE CROW started making traditional Cherokee baskets and pottery under the guidance of craftspeople at the Oconaluftee Indian Village on the Qualla Boundary. In the years since, his career has come full-circle. Not only is he a renowned craftsman himself, he now teaches and demonstrates at the village, too.

Crow is best-known as a basket maker. He excels in the highly traditional Cherokee forms of rivercane, white oak, and honeysuckle baskets. Completing every step by hand, he gathers and prepares his own materials, and makes natural dyes from ingredients like walnut and bloodroot. Crow is also a skilled potter, working in the ancient techniques of coiling and molding clay, and burnishing and imprinting traditional designs on the surfaces of the vessels.

Crow maintains a busy schedule of teaching and demonstrating throughout the year. He has demonstrated at the North Carolina Folk Festival, representing the traditions of Cherokee pottery and basketry. He also receives invitations from arts organizations across the country to demonstrate and sell his work at fairs, galleries, and other venues. When Crow is at home in Cherokee, in addition to teaching at the Oconaluftee Indian Village, he works at Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, the renowned artist co-op in Cherokee.

AVAILABILITY

Gabe Crow will consider invitations to teach and demonstrate, and to sell his work.

Calleigh Crumpler

Folk music



Photo: Alex Morelli

Durham, Durham County, NC

calleigh.music@gmail.com

"Blue Christmas"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNPtat76cQ>

PIEDMONT

Playing music is a big part of my family gatherings—it brings all of us together." **CALLEIGH CRUMPLER**, 26, is a singer-songwriter from the Triangle who plays music from a wide range of eras and genres. Her voice has been described as "soulful, raw and emitting real emotion." She enjoys performing covers from other genres in a folk style as well as writing her own tunes. "Folk music is all about telling a story and creating community. It's not just about being perfect or putting on a perfect performance."

Crumpler started in musical theatre at a young age, and later transitioned into accompanying her singing with guitar. As a student at UNC Chapel Hill, she was active in the music department and earned a minor in music. She was also a member of the UNC women's glee club for all four years of her undergraduate career. In addition to performing at gigs and open mics in the Triangle, Crumpler has worked in the music industry in a variety of capacities.

She grew up in a family that appreciates the ability for music to bring people together, and she looks forward to maintaining that tradition in her own artistic practice. Whether it has been at home, in the glee club, or at her local church band, Crumpler has found good company through her art. "Finding community...that's what folk music is all about."

AVAILABILITY

Calleigh Crumpler will consider performance invitations.

Cypher Univercity

Freestyle rap | Hip-hop



Raleigh, Wake County, NC
cypherunivercity@gmail.com

www.cyphacypha.com
www.facebook.com/cypherunivercity
Twitter: @cypheru

NC State Cypher Anniversary
www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL5PQ00hfSg

PIEDMONT

In traditions of African American vernacular music, improvisation is key. Mastery requires knowledge, embodied and practiced, of how to extend beyond, cut through, and return. In hip-hop, improvisational skill can manifest itself when an emcee freestyles, deploying wordplay, punchlines, and imagery over the consistent drum of a 4/4 beat. In a cypher, emcees gather in a circle and make up rhymes on the spot. Participants in a cypher testify to their deep improvisational legacy. On college campuses across the Triangle, Cypher Univercity carries on that tradition.

Established in 2014, Cypher Univercity (also known as CyphU) grew out of the NC State Cypher, which began in 2010. Part collective and part movement, CyphU hosts cyphers every Monday on the NC State campus in addition to organizing showcase performances where the collective's pinnacle verbal stylists have dazzled audiences at venues like Kings, Imurj, and the Pour House Music Hall. The core of CyphU's programming remains its campus events. Having sponsored and supported sibling-cyphers on the campuses of East Carolina University, UNC-Charlotte, Appalachian State, and UNC-Chapel Hill, CyphU reiterates that the vitality of freestyling as an art form and hip hop as a culture lie in how they facilitate and are fed by community—specifically, intergenerational community. On any campus, a first-year college student and a 40-year-old emcee can step in cypher, lyrically lock up, and share in a competitive dialogue of improvisation that crosses decades, refining and remembering a tradition of verbal and musical excellence.

Verbal and musical excellence inform what CyphU's founders consider "the essence" of hip hop. "The essence" represents a fidelity to the intent of hip hop: building community through art, be it rapping, b-boying, graffiti, or DJ-ing. "All of us respect and love the essence of hip hop culture, and we wanted to keep that," says co-founder Nick Tucson. "Here or in Asheville or in Boone, all of us are connected through that main ideal. . . There are lifelong friendships that have been cultivated because of this."

AVAILABILITY

In addition to the regular freestyles organized by the group, CypherU is available to be booked for showcases, festivals, and education workshops.

Eric Dawson

Jazz saxophone



Kinston, Lenoir County, NC

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reverbNation.com/ericxavier

COASTAL PLAIN

Even more than his smooth, melodic style, saxophonist **ERIC XAVIER DAWSON**'s greatest asset as an artist is his talent for communication. A school band director in Edgecombe County, Dawson excels not only at elevating a group of musicians with different skills, but bridging the gap between performers and venues to ensure that the unique needs of local musicians are understood and compensated. "I'm kind of like the Explainer-in-Chief," he says.

Dawson was born and raised in Kinston, NC, hotbed of funk and home to generations of music educators. Despite Kinston's reputation for live music, Dawson first encountered live music not at venues but in his own home. A former Army band member, Dawson's father hosted jam sessions in the house. Young Eric would sit in and listen. After starting on keyboards at age 10, he joined in the jam. Devouring his father's collection of soul records, Dawson gained a reputation in high school for making rap and R&B beats, but after reading a jazz theory book borrowed from a friend, he developed an infatuation with jazz that would alter his musical career.

While at Elizabeth City State University, Dawson picked up the saxophone for the first time playing for Jazz Connection, a jazz/soul group. Encouraged by his bandmates, Dawson completed his music degree at North Carolina Central University. During this time, he frequented jam sessions around the Triangle, refining his chops and making connections.

Returning to NC from a trip to California where jazz legend Arthur Blythe offered him advice on landing gigs, Dawson struck a deal with the manager of Kinston's Red Room night club, agreeing to book shows every couple of weekends on the condition that Dawson's group played once a month. "The ideal of what I was doing," remembers Dawson, "[was] trying to create a little circuit." Later, Dawson applied his booking experience to help launch the Wayne County Jazz Showcase in Goldsboro.

Having played with luminaries like Joe Chambers and Branford Marsalis, Dawson still advocates for local talent. "Before I call guys that are in New York," he says on booking shows, "I'll go see who's around here." To Dawson, NC's inimitable jazz tradition still produces top talent today. "They're going to have to tell [bookers] to stop calling people from everywhere else. We're right here."

AVAILABILITY

Eric Dawson and his band are available for concert bookings in a variety of venues.

Defacto Thezgian

Hip-hop | Rap



Durham, Durham County, NC

thezpians@gmail.com

www.defactothezgian.com
www.facebook.com/DefactoThezgian
www.soundcloud.com/defactothezgian
www.defactothezgian.bandcamp.com

"Self Proclaimed King"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXge3r-xd1M>

"I Don't"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEa-qz_FxvM

PIEDMONT

Durham-based rapper **DEFACTO THEZPIAN** is aptly named. The Latin phrase "de facto" translates to "in fact" or "what is real in practice," while "thespian" refers either to a single actor or to the wider world of theatrical drama— So Defacto Thezgian is a "real actor." The years of theatre training in his youth reveal themselves in the deft way Thezgian handles a live performance. Pouring his whole self into his role as performer on stage, Thezgian distinguishes himself as a rapper by forming a connection with his audience, live and singing along, that could only be called real. Viewing hip hop as a hobby in high school, the Durham-raised lyricist didn't initially consider it as a career path. After graduation, Thezgian moved to New York, where he successfully auditioned for the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. However, high living expenses and the cost of tuition motivated him to return home. With a little free time on his hands, Thezgian decided to pursue rap music, release mixtapes, and finally record a full-length album.

In 2013, his debut album out in the world and concert attendance increasing, Thezgian embraced performing music full-time, and soon became a fixture in Durham's vibrant independent hip hop community. Voted Best Hip Hop Artist at the 2015 Carolina Music Awards, profiled in prominent rap blogs like 2DopeBoyz, and featured on festival stages like the North Carolina State Fair and A3C, Thezgian balances his rising star with a commitment to his deep Durham roots, teaching creative rap classes at Walltown Children's Theatre, offering personal coaching, and supporting other local artists. "[Some artists] don't want to talk to artists on the path that they once were on," explains Thezgian. "The only way the newer generation is going to succeed and do better than last one is if the last one is trying to help them."

AVAILABILITY

Thezgian is available for solo concert performances, festival sets, or other showcases. In addition, he can help develop education workshops tailored to rap performance.

Sachi Dely

Painting | Montagnard (Bunong) contemporary art



Photo: Phyllis Dooney

Greensboro, Guilford County, NC

(336) 517-5240

delys@guilford.edu

Instagram: @artby_sachi

PIEDMONT

"My art is my form of cultural preservation," declares painter **SACHI DELY**. Sachi is Bunong, one of the ethnic groups that make up the Montagnard population in NC. Called Montagnards ("mountaineers") by early French colonists, the Bunong and other communities allied with the United States during the Vietnam War and were forced to flee at the war's end. Vietnamese Montagnards are still persecuted for their ethnicity and Christian beliefs.

Dely was born in Daklat Province, Vietnam, in 1999. Her family escaped persecution and fled to Cambodia when she was just a year old. They left a refugee camp in 2004 to make Greensboro their permanent home, joining thousands of other Montagnards who live in the North Carolina Piedmont. Dely quickly mastered English and excelled in the Greensboro public schools before becoming an art major at Guilford College. She has always loved art, she says, and can't think of anything she would like to do more.

Concerned about the loss of cultural traditions and arts experienced by the Bunong and other Montagnard groups, Dely seeks to incorporate Bunong art and history into her painting. She retains strong memories of her early years in Vietnam and Cambodia, and these emerge in her work. She hopes to be known as a Bunong artist, and to tell the story of her people through her art.

AVAILABILITY

Sachi Dely is available for opportunities to display or sell her work through galleries and craft fairs.

Eternal the MC

Hip-hop | Rap



Raleigh, Wake County, NC

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www.eternalthemc.com

soundcloud.com/eternalthemc

eternalthemc.bandcamp.com

Instagram: @eternalthemc

PIEDMONT

How far is Brooklyn from Raleigh, anyhow? Though North Carolina is part of the South, the aesthetics of its hip hop culture can often skew northward. Between the drive on I-95 and the gravitational pull of the state's universities, multiple research institutions, and historically black colleges and universities, many of New York's finest have made their way to NC, bringing their stories and the sonic legacies of the boroughs they called home. **ETERNAL THE MC's** is one of those stories.

Growing up in Brooklyn—where hip hop legends like Jay-Z, Notorious BIG, and Big Daddy Kane cut their teeth—Eternal “was in the culture.” Walking through the streets, a young Eternal would see cyphers and concerts almost every day. Despite hip hop culture's saturation in his home borough, Eternal considered himself more a jazz fanatic than wordsmith. Yet his big brother rapped. His friends rapped. And, when in his comfort zone, Eternal would rap, too, showcasing an aptitude that his companions noticed. “I was molding myself without even knowing it,” he recalls. “Everyone's telling me I'm good. Let me see if I can really make something of this.” At 21, Eternal resolved to pursue the life of a hip hop artist. At the same time, he decided to attend Shaw University in Raleigh to study psychology, and to test his skills in a new environment. “Alright, now here is the true test. Nobody knows me beside my artistry and my craft,” he remembers. “And I was getting the same response.”

That enthusiastic response can be attributed to the fact that he holds his artistry and craft to the standard of his name. “I proclaim myself Eternal because I want to live forever through my body of work,” reads his website. On his 2018 LP *Dive Deep*, a theme runs through connecting the longevity of one's legacy with the depth of one's introspection.

Through both his solo work and his collaborations with the grassroots freestyle rap collective Cypher Univercity, Eternal the MC demonstrates that “Hip hop is something you live. Rap is something you do.”

AVAILABILITY

Eternal the MC is available to be booked for solo concerts, festival sets, and other events.

Billie Feather

Old-time | Bluegrass | Country



Durham, Durham County, NC

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billiefeather.virb.com

PIEDMONT

Like many folk artists, the musical bug didn't bite Billie Feather out of nowhere. Rather, it was a hereditary condition. Born into a Pennsylvania family of gifted singers, Feather and her folks relocated to the tobacco farms of Oxford to find work. Moving back and forth between Tenn. and NC exposed Feather to folk songs, country tunes, and mountain music. By fourth grade, she recalls, "I was doing old mountain, like Carter style stuff, and I learned just from what I had seen and what I had heard."

Clearly, Feather has seen, heard, and learned a lot. An adroit multi-instrumentalist who can shift between gospel and bluegrass, rock and old-time, Feather earned degrees in Classical Guitar Performance from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and Jazz Studies from North Carolina Central University. Instead of undermining, a classical musical education bolstered her flair for folk music. "Lots of the kids there from all over the state would all bring their own traditions," she remembers. "There was a classical guitar player that also played clawhammer banjo, and we had another guy from Hickory who played mandolin. . . .And [we'd] then go and practice for eight hours in the practice room for classical guitar."

Having toured the world with her bands the Bo-Stevens, and The Darnell Woodies, and performed alongside George Jones and The Steep Canyon Rangers, Feather grounds herself as a teacher.

AVAILABILITY

Billie Feather is available for shows, either as a solo artist or as part of an ensemble. A Suzuki-certified instructor, she hosts weekly jams and learning sessions at Durham's High Strung Violins and Guitars, but she can also be hired for private lessons.

Five Points Rounders

Square dance organizing | Square dance calling | Old-time



Durham, Durham County, NC

www.facebook.com/FivePointsRounders

"Pretty Little Girl" - Rowdy Square Dance @ The Pinhook

www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9KuhqrPi-g

PIEDMONT

"One of the characteristics of the dances I like is chaos."

Rob VanVeld is a lot of things. He's a gutbucket bass virtuoso. He's been a bandleader of local old-time music groups for years. He's not a millennial (he's in his seventies), but he is an architect of a traditional arts event that has summoned throngs of joyous millennials to pack the floors of North Carolina bars: the **ROWDY SQUARE DANCE**.

Held on a random basis at a variety of venues throughout the Triangle, though primarily at Durham's The Pinhook, the Rowdy Square Dance injects square dancing with a punk rock spirit that resonates with millennials. As the Rowdy Square Dance's house band, the **FIVE POINT ROUNDERS**, fire through a rendition of "Pretty Little Girl," and the colored lights of the Pinhook bathe the stage in crimson, the crowd—which includes first-timers and experts, and people of diverse ages, ethnicities, and gender identities—dances classic squares that hark back to the early 20th century. The caller tells them to do-si-do, to promenade, to swing. The form is familiar, yet a frenetic, devil-may-care energy vitalizes it all. Even as they follow the calls, dancers sometimes bump into each other, step off beat, or twirl with a freedom that only failing without fear can achieve. As one Rowdy Square Dance caller put it, "If you're not doing something wrong, you're not doing it right."

The precursor to the Rowdy Square Dance was held at a wedding in 2010. The "guestlist was saturated with musicians and oddballs," remembers van Veld, who put together a band to play the reception. "It was one of the best dances I ever played for. It was like circles of eight [with] moshing. During the Virginia Reel. . . there was like breakdancing and stuff." Van Veld was later asked to put on a square dance at The Pinhook, and after forming the Five Points Rounders with a group of musicians he met at the Durham Farmers' Market, the first official Rowdy Square Dance was held that year.

With David Bass on fiddle, Colin Booy on banjo, Tracy Lafleur on guitar, and Jim O'Keefe replacing the now-retired VanVeld on bass, the Five Points Rounders continue to perform shows and hold Rowdy Square Dances (on an intermittent basis) throughout the Triangle.

AVAILABILITY

The Five Points Rounders are available for booking for conventional performances and for Rowdy Square Dances. They can be reached via their Facebook page.

Josh Floyd

Pottery



Seagrove, Randolph County, NC

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joshua@floyd pots.com

www.floyd pots.com

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/floyd pots>

Twitter: @Floyd pots

PIEDMONT

In the most tumultuous of times, **JOSH FLOYD** has sought and found solace in making pots. He hopes the same for his pots—that they might bring peace in use, just as they have brought him peace in their making.

Floyd describes himself as a West Virginia city kid, living closer to Pittsburgh than to the capitol in Charleston, WV. His family didn't hunt and didn't own land, and unbeknownst to him, he had been born and bred in a place called Appalachia. Floyd had no idea of the word, or its connotations, but he has spent his life places skirting its edges, like Western Pa., Appomattox, Va., and Eastern Ohio along the Ohio River. Now, Floyd lives in Seagrove, NC's pottery mecca, where he has come to realize that he never left those rolling hills of his childhood. He just kept circling them looking for a place to land.

Floyd believes in function: comfort, ergonomics and ease of use are of utmost importance in his pottery. He wants his pots to be used in the home, for coffee with a friend or drink at the end of a long day. The reality often, however is that his pots find their way to a display shelf and serve a different function: beauty in the lives of the owners. Floyd is just as happy if his work functions for beauty rather than utility, for the intention for both lies in his heart as a maker.

AVAILABILITY

Josh Floyd is available for teaching, demonstrating, and residencies. His work can be found on his website and often on his Etsy shop.

Erika Frazier

Bluegrass vocals | Old-time vocals



Winston Salem, Forsyth County, NC

theblisteredhearts@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/TheBlisteredHearts/>

"Long Black Veil"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zxw1S16v1tw>

PIEDMONT

When growing up, kids often spend car rides singing with their parents. Sometimes it's a top-40 tune. Sometimes it's a road-tripping song like "The Wheels on the Bus" or "99 Bottles of Beer." For Yadkinville bluegrass vocalist **ERIKA FRAZIER**, it was often a murder ballad. "Now that I'm thinking of it," she recollects, "there's videos of me in the car at four years old singing 'Long Black Veil.'"

Like many traditional artists, the extraordinary aspect of her upbringing is how ordinary she felt immersed in a rich musical heritage. Her father obtained his doctorate in music, specializing in church organ, sacred music, and classical. Raised in East Tennessee, her mother was exposed to folk, bluegrass, and early country music from an early age. Her grandfather was skilled folk singer, guitarist and dulcimer player. Yet, even though the traditional music of southern Appalachia surrounded her, "it wasn't until [she] was a little bit older that [she] understood how special it was to have."

After attending Appalachian State University, where she completed a degree in Music Industry Studies and encountered a plethora of passionate bluegrass and old-time musicians, Frazier began to realize that her upbringing was not only unique, but foundational to her future as a musician whose work places the worlds of Bach and Bill Monroe in conversation, primarily through Blistered Hearts, her group with Winston-Salem Symphony general manager Travis Creed and local fiddler and classical violinist R.J. Wohlman. First booked as the Winston-Salem Symphony Bluegrass Band, Blistered Hearts has a diverse repertoire that covers old-time, bluegrass, bar songs, Americana, traditional tunes, and original compositions by Creed. Blistered Hearts have primarily gigged around the Winston-Salem area, playing venues like the Muddy Creek Cafe and Music Hall, the Willingham Theater, and Reeves Theater and Cafe.

While Frazier grapples with the notion of being a "traditional" artist, she still desires to be "well known in the community for singing this kind of music." As executive assistant at the Yadkin Arts Council, Frazier also works so that the traditional music of her youth thrives in her community, facilitating the Yadkin County Junior Appalachian Musicians program. "These kids are going to grow up appreciating something that I always had," says Frazier, "but just [didn't] necessarily appreciate."

AVAILABILITY

Erika Frazier and her band Blistered Hearts are available for booking.

Amelia Freeman-Lynde

Freeman's Creative
Fiber crafts



Durham, Durham County, NC

amelia@freemanscreative.com

www.freemanscreative.com

PIEDMONT

AMELIA FREEMAN-LYNDE comes from a family who prides themselves on making things with their own hands. Freeman-Lynde was born in Slidell, Louisiana, but grew up in Athens, Georgia, and lived in New York City for several years after college, working as a prop master and stage hand. As a child, she learned handskills like knitting, basic woodworking and gardening from her parents and her grandparents, who built a passive solar home for themselves in upstate New York. After earning a degree in Theater from Barnard College, Freeman-Lynde put her talents to use working as a stage hand and prop master in New York City for several years. Huge pieces of fake food (think: handmade steak) are among her proudest props, but connecting her professional and personal craft practice is a desire to resist today's throwaway, consumer society. In her words, "I want the world to be on a different track than I see it going." Freeman-Lynde and her husband relocated to Durham, NC and Amelia founded Craft Attack, a community potluck and crafting group.

In September 2018, she established Freeman's Creative, where you can find the tools, materials, instructions, and inspiration to make handmade goods for your closet, home, and kitchen. Freeman-Lynde supports local artists by selling their creations and inviting them to teach low-cost community classes, and she also rents part of her store as studio space. Freeman's Creative maintains her family ties—her mother helps with bookkeeping, her husband does tech support, and Freeman-Lynde and her father-in-law built the large fabric cutting table themselves.

AVAILABILITY

Visit www.freemanscreative.com for up to date shop hours and current class schedules.

Tim Gardner

Old-time | Banjo making



Brevard, Transylvania County, NC

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tim@cedarmtnbanjos.com

www.cedarmtnbanjos.com

"My Home NC: Banjo Maker"

<https://youtu.be/pGB7gZ9cfQA>

MOUNTAINS

Owner and craftsman of Cedar Mountain Banjos, **TIM GARDNER** is a second-generation luthier, having learned from his father, banjo builder and Cedar Mountain founder Lo Gordon. Since 2005 Gardner has built more than 400 banjos. A recent article in *Banjo Newsletter* referred to Cedar Mountain banjos as "exquisitely handcrafted instruments . . . The craftsmanship is unparalleled and the tone is excellent."

Gardner is an accomplished bluegrass and old-time musician. He tours and records as a member of the bluegrass band Unspoken Tradition. Previously, he belonged to High Windy, another NC band. Gardner has placed highly in fiddle contests throughout the region, and he plays a variety of other instruments and styles. He teaches music when time permits, and produces recordings for other area musicians. On balancing his luthiery and performance careers, Gardner writes that, "I'm fortunate that I am able to improve my skills while actively performing my craft. I'm always thinking of new and better ways of making banjos as well as honing my musical skills."

AVAILABILITY

Tim Gardner will consider invitations to perform and teaching inquiries. Visit www.cedarmtnbanjos.com for shop availability.

Michele Gourley

Mountain dulcimer | Percussion



Photo: Rohan Kothari

Durham, Durham County, NC

(615) 300-8682

michelegourley@gmail.com

PIEDMONT

MICHELE GOURLEY (also known as Michele Star) is a Nashville-born and Durham-based multi-instrumentalist whose performances have ranged from playing mountain dulcimer in small fishing villages in Iceland, performing as a symphony percussionist alongside Mark O' Connor and the Canadian Brass Band, and marching in one of the largest collegiate marching bands for the inauguration of the 43rd President of the United States. She served as Artist in Residence for Durham County Beer and Hymns for 2017 and is currently an Artist in Residence for Duke Arts and Health.

She enjoys combining her talents to create unique musical experiences in eclectic venues. Her performance sites have ranged from large cathedrals and concert halls in major metropolitan cities to the emergency department of a psychiatric hospital. Gourley is formally trained in classical and jazz styles of music and steeped in the culture of Appalachian song and dance. Her latest endeavor includes performing original and traditional tunes on the mountain dulcimer interspersed with an occasional cover or funny story of her time working in the fields of medicine and theology. In all instances, she hopes to bring an authentic sound that inspires the mind and uplifts the soul.

AVAILABILITY

Michele Gourley will consider invitations to perform and collaborate on mountain dulcimer and percussion.

Tatiana Hargreaves

Old-time | Fiddle



Durham, Durham County, NC

www.tatianahargreaves.com

www.facebook.com/tatianahargreaves

With Allison de Groot, "I Don't Want to Get Married"

<https://youtu.be/nMXR4u9vJ6A>

Floyd (VA) Get Together Dance, 2018

<https://youtu.be/mct0naafsRc>

PIEDMONT

Oregon native **TATIANA HARGREAVES** quickly became a central figure in the NC music scene upon settling in her new home. Already a leading old-time fiddler, Hargreaves was only the second woman to win the prestigious fiddle contest at WVa's Appalachian String Band Festival (Clifftop), and she recorded her first album while still in her teens. She is also an accomplished bluegrass fiddler, and has toured with Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, Laurie Lewis, and Darol Anger.

Hargreaves has a degree in ethnomusicology from Hampshire College, and wrote her thesis on the rise and influence of fiddle camps. Her academic background contributes to her work as a music educator. In addition to the many workshops she has given at music events across the country, she has also taught bluegrass fiddle at UNC-Chapel Hill, and given presentations on traditional American music at the Instituto Superior del Arte in Havana, Cuba.

Appearing on numerous recordings, Hargreaves records both as a solo artist and in collaboration with other musicians. She has made duet albums with Ethan Jodziewicz and Jake Blount, and she tours and records with banjo player Allison De Groot. In 2019, Hargreaves recorded an album with Aaron Tacke, Sonya Badigian, and Nokosee Fields under the name Hard Drive, a band that describes itself as "a hard-driving aural modern traditional old time authentic millennial bluegrass collective."

AVAILABILITY

Tatiana Hargreaves will consider invitations to perform, both solo and with collaborators, and to teach and present on traditional American music. Contact her at www.tatianahargreaves.com.

Rex Harris

Flintknapping



Photo: Cassandra Klos

Glen Allen, Henrico County, VA | Hollister, Halifax County, NC

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sacredpath2004@msn.com

PIEDMONT

Sappony artist and flintknapper **REX HARRIS** has lived his entire life in Richmond, Virginia, but his family and tribal ties to Hollister, NC – the homeland of the Haliwa-Saponi people – connected him to the traditional arts and crafts of NC's Haliwa-Saponi community since childhood. Learning from cousins who had access to native arts in school, Harris absorbed what he could in Hollister and returned to Richmond to continue on his own. Today Harris is a cabinetmaker and carpenter by trade, but his knowledge of traditional arts has spanned from beadwork to leatherwork to carvings in soapstone, bone, and antler, and he is a regular presence. He began to teach himself to flintknap in his 40s, working from glass bottles salvaged from creekbeds before becoming skilled enough to create the fine projectile points and stone tools of flint, chert, and obsidian that he now displays at festivals, pow wows, and workshops across the Southeast.

Harris has been asked to teach flintknapping to the Haliwa-Saponi in Hollister, and to the Piscataway tribe of Maryland, and will teach anyone who comes to him to learn. "This art goes to everybody's ancestors, no matter which continent you come from, but I'm interested in bringing it back to the tribes," he says. "I've been to many tribal events and people have no clue what I'm doing, because this skill has been gone for 600-800 years." Despite the lack of modern use for stone tools, Harris finds valuable knowledge of skill, culture, and technology all wound up together in a single well-made point. "It's survival. It goes hand in hand with everything we are now."

AVAILABILITY

Rex Harris is available to present and demonstrate at festivals, powwows, and other cultural events, and will consider teaching requests.

K-Hill

Hip-hop | Rap



Raleigh, Wake County, NC

(252) 360-6334

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www.khillmusic.com

"The Ride" by K-Hill feat. Precyce Politix

<https://youtu.be/cHnMa5BJIAY>

"The Feeling" by Stallone & Weathers (production by K-Hill)

<https://youtu.be/Wbp6QKSH0Zk>

PIEDMONT

K-HILL is a hip hop artist who pays particular attention to vision. He is a talented producer who has been crafting beats since he was a teenager fiddling with a four-track cassette deck; his songs feature all the hallmarks of '90s-indebted boom-bap rap. Yet the vision doesn't end with the track's execution, the balance between beats and bars. K-Hill's vision extends into where his songs go in the world, and what his music says about the culture of hip hop.

Attending North Carolina A&T University during the mid-2000s, K-Hill began his career as a rapper-producer while artists like Little Brother were bringing attention to the Tar Heel State. Like that seminal group, K-Hill embraced an aesthetic indebted to the golden era of hip hop, the 1980s and '90s. His debut mixtape, *Stamp of Approval* (2004), tracks in sample-based production, adroit lyricism, and themes skeptical of materialism and oriented toward social consciousness.

With every subsequent release, not only has K-Hill proven that those foundational hip hop stylistics are still vital and current, he has also demonstrated North Carolina's deep connection to hip hop's history. Operating as a local, independent artist for over a decade, K-Hill has built a career that embraces that legacy. "We want to stick to the raw form of making music," says K-Hill. His record label Kick-a-Verse, his duo Stallone & Weathers, and his production work with other local hip hop artists show that music can be at its most vital in its raw form.

AVAILABILITY

In addition to booking for concerts, festivals, and other live events, K-Hill is also available to produce beats for local hip hop musicians.

Brody Hunt

Brody Hunt & The Handfuls
Honky-tonk | Country



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"Leave Him Be"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65GLTUfchFA>

MOUNTAINS

A **BRODY HUNT** song rumbles low and thumps hard, drawing from Hank Williams honky-tonk and Merle Haggard outlaw country music. At any moment, Hunt's voice can go from dive bar howl to blue yodel. While the inspiration of traditional country is unmistakable, Hunt's music "is not a reenactment." In fact, like his forebears, Hunt "write[s] songs [about] what's happening today." Whether singing about high stumpin' snags, goofy hipsters, or lovesick blues, he demonstrates country music's eternal capacity to capture an emotional position that is urgent and alive.

Born in Lane County, Oregon, Hunt heard country music often when he was growing up. Neighbors blasted Hank Williams, Jr., and Dolly Parton. His grandmother yodeled, and relatives put together the occasional jug bands. There were Gene Autry Westerns. There were Riders in the Sky concerts. While "it wasn't like everyone was picking banjos on the porch every day after working the fields," says Hunt, the sound of country music became the sound of Hunt's family coming together. It became a sound with which he fell overpoweringly in love.

During his teenage years, Hunt gravitated to "what's called harder and purer stuff, more traditional stuff." "[I] started listening to Merle Haggard," he remembers, "and then before too long that leads you to Jimmie Rodgers and then you got the whole rest of the world." By the age of 20, Hunt had become fully obsessed with this world. Obsessions, however, do not always lay the tracks for an immediate career. Throughout his twenties Hunt fought forest fires, chopped trees, hopped trains, busked, and hoboed, finding work in the Pacific Northwest and in western North Carolina and other parts of the Southeast. Wanting to "quit the trains," Hunt found a place to settle down in west Asheville.

Since moving to Asheville, Hunt has gigged consistently throughout the area, solo and with various groups. With his five-piece honky-tonk outfit, the Handfuls, Hunt has played venues like the Grey Eagle, the Double Crown, and the Quad at UNC Asheville. Ultimately, he plans to build a career playing the music he's loved since he first learned to bang out tunes on a guitar at thirteen, a nearly century-old sound that—to use his words—is "alive and well."

AVAILABILITY

Hunt can play shows with his five-piece honky-tonk band, The Handfuls, or his three-to-seven piece North Carolina string band, the Carolina Cud Chewers. In addition, he can consult on Asheville music history.

Lena Jackson

Hip-hop | Rap



Photo: Phyllis Dooney

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"End Of The Tunnel feat. Maestra"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=cjrTvIck4JM

"Poor Kids"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJgx4DpsFAM>

PIEDMONT

Delivery makes a difference. From Christmas presents to bills, to poetry verses and rap lyrics, delivery shapes and transforms content, and few emcees grasp this notion better than **LENA JACKSON**. The gravity of Jackson's lyrical themes is pronounced. She addresses domestic violence and other abuse in songs like "Cookies" and "House of Blues" from her EP *Darkness Brim*, and her personal narratives of witnessing and experiencing poverty underwrite the activist call of "Poor Kids." "Came from the bottom, real bottom / No mainstream rhetoric involved / I walked floors that were rotten." Jackson's origins as a poet draw her toward subject matter with high stakes, yet her skills as a rapper allow her to handle those themes with a deft touch. With remarkable breath control, Jackson raps with a cadence that is clear, urgent, and direct. Every word lands with intention. As "Poor Kids" concludes, a question lingers. Did you just hear a rap song or a poem? That's Jackson's talent. She packs the weight of a poem in the package of a rap track, letting audiences open unexpected stories.

Like those of so many wordsmiths, Jackson's story begins not with rapping in front of stages but alongside friends. "Being a bit of a tomboy, I would be around my guy friends and they were always beating on tables and rapping and stuff like that," she remembers. "And I thought it would be nice if I could fit my poetry in there and use it in kind of a similar form, and I found out that I could." Jackson has had featured performances at the Beats N Bars Festival, the Carrboro Music Festival, the Yo! NC Raps! showcase, and the pre-show for the Carolina Music Awards, where she was nominated for an award herself.

Jackson bases her art in community. The daughter of activists, and a counselor to at-risk youths, she creates independent music that builds upon the tangible work she does day-to-day. "My music is not something I want to promote because I want to make it big," she explains. "For me, my kickback is the opportunity to reach people that may need to just hear it. . . . I want to use my voice to connect with the community."

AVAILABILITY

Lena Jackson is available for concerts, festivals, and other live events.

Alyssa Johnson

Pottery



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MOUNTAINS

You can find the mountains in the pottery of **ALYSSA JOHNSON**—both figuratively and literally. Pencil-drawn into the clay, mountain ranges often cut across Johnson's plates. In one, the ridges are a navy blue, rich as the haze that hovers over Appalachian mountains. In another, they are rust-red, evocative of sundown on the trail. In all of them, along with Johnson's casseroles, cups, and other functional forms, there's an acute sensitivity to the synergy between memories of place and utility of design. "I'm a very sentimental person," explains Johnson, "and I have very specific memories attached to these places." A visit to Looking Glass Rock with her sister may inspire the creation of a plate, but that same plate will later inspire memories tied to another place and time—even if it's the kitchen table, family gathered for the hundredth time, the dinnerware arranged as it always has been.

Growing up in Florida, where she "spent more time in mud pits than anything," Johnson developed a fascination with clay when a kindergarten teacher gave her a piece of clay to make a pinch-pot. Years passed, and this fascination deepened. She participated in her high school ceramics program, and at Florida Gulf Coast University, produced a coil pot inspired by the Acoma tradition for her final project. Pursuing additional instruction at a community studio in Naples, Johnson soon began working as a studio assistant—first at Clay More Ceramics, and then at Annabelle Johnson pottery. With the encouragement of Annabelle Johnson, she moved to western North Carolina to pursue a career as a potter, enrolling in Haywood Community College's Professional Crafts program, where she graduated in spring of 2019. Now, Johnson works as a studio ceramics artist at Reems Creak Pottery in Weaverville.

Though not raised in North Carolina, Johnson cherishes how the state and its traditions have nurtured her craft. "North Carolina folk pottery has totally found its way into my work," she says, "in my forms, in the glazes that I use, how I fire, how I work." Moreover, the quantity and quality of practitioners this tradition has produced—both historic and contemporary—reinforces to Johnson that she is "part of a community" and that her commitment to the craft "is serious. . .is real."

AVAILABILITY

In addition to having pots available for viewing and sale at Reems Creak Pottery, Johnson can be contacted for commissions.

Kate Johnston

Pottery



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PIEDMONT

"I make pots that draw from history." When you scan the surfaces of New Jersey-born, Seagrove-based potter **KATE JOHNSTON**, you discover patterns that span the breadth of history and geography. Her designs evoke Art Deco ornamentation and vernacular quilts, lush book illuminations and radiant stain glass windows. Yet, while she reaches toward the edges of the world for inspiration, Johnston's pots build upon the storied traditions of NC pottery. "I take, I guess, what I like from the annals of things humans have made and apply it to the pots," Johnston muses. "So, of course, North Carolina comes into that with [its] generous bellies and voluptuous forms."

A graduate of Alfred University, which has produced a slew of boundary-pushing ceramic artists, Johnston opened her own studio in Seagrove in 2010. Since then, her pots have been featured both at home and abroad: the Randolph Arts Guild, the Catawba Valley Pottery Festival, the annual conference for the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, and more. She has also facilitated workshops on carving, pattern-making, and more at institutions like Alfred University and the Appalachian Center for Craft.

Whether teaching or practicing her craft, Johnston approaches pottery with a sense of joy, humor, curiosity, and commitment to building upon North Carolina pottery traditions. "It's funny to send someone home with a 13th century Iranian form with a North Carolina pattern on it," she says, "You'd have to be a really geeky ceramic art historian to know. [...] No one gets the joke but me. But I think it's great."

AVAILABILITY

In addition to selling her own pots, Kate Johnston is available for commissions. She can also present lectures, demonstrations, and workshops. In addition, she is interested in featuring her work in galleries, museums, and other exhibition spaces.

Daniel Johnston

Pottery



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PIEDMONT

DANIEL JOHNSTON is a Seagrove original, and his pottery represents one of the core values of Seagrove—honoring tradition while pursuing innovation. Yes, he crafts three-to-four feet tall pots for individual purchase. But, he also develops “large constructed environments” that can feature between 30 to 100 large jars presented inside wooden structures that often resemble the kilns in which the very ceramics were fired, marrying production pottery, traditional techniques, and conceptual art into a craft that is both defined by and transcendent of its roots.

Johnston, however, describes his entry into pottery in grounded terms: “It was a way to make money.” Leaving school at the age of 16, the Randolph County-native began a career in production pottery, churning out over 30,000 pots a year. It was a brief career, though. Master potter Mark Hewitt recruited Johnston, then 18, for a four-year apprenticeship. Johnston’s training then went international. He studied craftsmanship under Clive Bowen in England and then learned traditional large jar-making under Sawein Silikom in the Phon Bok village of Thailand. Culminating years of traditional schooling and entrepreneurial experience, Johnston finally opened his Seagrove studio in 2003. Since then, his individual pieces and installations have appeared at venues like GreenHill, the Mahler, and the International Museum of Folk Art. In 2014, Eastern Michigan University awarded him a Distinguished Honorary Scholar Professorship.

An artist, a lecturer, a pottery-maker, Johnston revels in how ceramics balances labor from both the body and the brain. The clay offers “room for intellectual growth, and there’s a lot of physical work,” he says. “I like that combination.”

AVAILABILITY

Though available for commissions, Daniel Johnston is interested in featuring his work in galleries, museums, and other exhibition spaces. He can also present lectures, demonstrations, and workshops.

The Jones Brothers

Joshua and Johnathan Jones
Bluegrass



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MOUNTAINS

Brothers **JOHNATHAN AND JOSHUA JONES** began to play bluegrass tunes as students in the Junior Appalachian Musicians program (JAM) at the Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center. In the decade since starting as JAM students, Johnathan has learned banjo and resonator guitar, while Joshua plays both fiddle and mandolin, and both have remained involved with JAM as teachers. In addition to teaching, The Jones Brothers perform traditional bluegrass tunes with guitarist Betsy Blankenship and Larry Garrett on upright bass, while Betsy, Joshua, and Johnathan share the vocal melodic line and harmonies.

Encouraged by Bill Pruitt, their teacher in the JAM program, Johnathan and Joshua started playing at local jams, unrehearsed performances where bluegrass musicians share and learn tunes. These jams were a creative space for the brothers to develop their style, blending traditional tunes with elements of modern bluegrass and country music.

The Jones Brothers primarily play in the Appalachian area between NC, Tenn., and Ga. They placed second at the Georgia Mountain Fair Bluegrass Competition, and regularly attend fiddlers' conventions in North Carolina and Tennessee. These gatherings of geographically diverse bluegrass and old-time musicians bring together a variety of styles. Johnathan and Joshua enjoy learning these many musical dialects and incorporating them into their own playing. The Jones Brothers are constantly expanding their repertoire, appreciating the local folktales that spark tunes while also looking toward the future evolution of bluegrass.

AVAILABILITY

The Jones Brothers will consider performance invitations across the Southeast region. Joshua Jones is on occasion available for music lessons during the summer months.

Bill Jones

Pottery



Greensboro, Guilford County, NC

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www.billjonespottery.com

Instagram: @wi7dbilljones

PIEDMONT

The pottery **BILL JONES** makes is meant for "daily, rigorous use." That is, it is meant to endure. Functional, his pieces are fixed, sturdy vessels meant to be picked up and moved around a living room, to be filled with hot liquid, to be weathered by human touch. Jones' ceramics achieve a startling, arresting sense of motion. Like with much of Jones' pottery, the abstract line work decorating his pieces reminds us that functional ceramics not only work in the world, but exist within it.

Creating art with which people engage in the world has been a focus in Jones' life, even before he became a potter. Attending Lehigh University in his hometown of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Jones studied architecture and design. After pursuing graduate work at the University of Michigan, he returned home. There, he got his hands on clay for the first time. Discovering a passion for ceramics, in addition to some encouragement from potters in his community, he decided to move to North Carolina, where he studied at the Penland School of Craft. A rigorous apprenticeship under Seagrove-based potter Daniel Johnston soon followed. "[I] feel like I got five years of throwing experience in two years," he recalls.

Since completing his apprenticeship, Jones has gone on to become an artist-in-residence at STARworks clay studio, operate his own studio, and collaborate with designer Erin Reitz on a line of home wares called the Shelter Collection.

AVAILABILITY

Jones is available to produce works on commission or participate in gallery exhibitions.

Njathi Kabui

Foodways | Activism | Anthropology



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PIEDMONT

NJATHI KABUI is an anthropologist and food activist whose work connects the South to Kenya. Born in Murang'a County near Mount Kenya, Kabui spent the first 20 years of his life learning about food systems firsthand from his mother, who grew coffee, and his father, who ran a restaurant. In 1990, Kabui left Kenya for Memphis, Tenn., where he earned his undergraduate degree in political science and his graduate degree in anthropology.

Kabui defines and structures his work through an activist lens. "I look at food from a political perspective, and more specifically, as a tool of empowerment," he explains. His work to support "food literacy," as he calls it, also extends back to his home community in Kenya. Kabui is currently helping the Boston-based non-profit, Foodies Without Borders, develop a culinary exchange program. He is also supporting Kenya's Green Belt Movement, which encourages communities to use idle land to plant trees to mitigate climate change—Kabui is from the same lineage as its founder, Wangire Mathai. Kabui currently grows African and other vegetables at Sparkroot Farm, a cooperative community in Moncure, NC. He cooks "Afro-futuristic Conscious Cuisine," as a guest chef and through special fine-dining pop-ups. "I'm a bridge between African consciousness and African American consciousness," says Kabui. Through his portfolio of projects, Kabui works not only to empower people through food literacy, but to also increase African cultural awareness in the South. As he says, "the old South is gone, and the new South is not yet here."

AVAILABILITY

Chef Njathi Kabui is available for consultations with urban farms, public speaking, teaching, residencies, writing, and cooking.

Willow Keasler

Old-time | Fiddle | Banjo



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Twitter: @FiddleFox731

Instagram: @Sherlock.Holmes.Dragon

Fiddle Competition

<https://youtu.be/zdL3x15Vsss>

"Shaving a Dead Man"

<https://youtu.be/XmUSn69apJg>

MOUNTAINS

WILLOW KEASLER is a traditional old-time musician carrying on the musical heritage of her Watauga County upbringing through the fiddle and banjo. Keasler came to old-time music through the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program in Watauga County and spent five years learning fiddle tunes through her mentor Cecil Gurganus. During her time in the JAM program, Keasler became part of a successful youth string band known as Strictly Strings, that toured as a professional band for four years and were honored to be featured at festivals including IBMA, MerleFest, The National Folk Festival, and as featured artists for the North Carolina Arts Council. After learning that she was related to the great fiddler Marion Reece of Zionville, NC, who was recorded by John Lomax in the 1930s, Keasler decided to pursue her future as an old-time musician in hopes of carrying on the tradition and sharing the music she had become so close to.

The members of Strictly Strings are now pursuing individual careers. Keasler is now in her senior year at Warren Wilson College where she is double majoring in Psychology and Traditional Music. She performs with her husband Joe Keasler as the duo January Embers. Keasler enjoys working to combine traditional fiddle styles from her greatest influences, including Bruce Molsky, David Bass, and Brad Leftwich, with more contemporary styles from musicians like Casey Driessen, Darol Anger, and Ben Sollee. Keasler enjoys exploring new sounds and styles to incorporate in her playing on both fiddle and banjo, as well as bringing modern twists to her execution of traditional styles. She finds collaborating and making connections one of the most important ways to help to build and keep her tradition growing and moving forward.

AVAILABILITY

Willow Keasler is available for solo performances as well as group performances. She and her husband Joe Keasler and available for performances as the group January Embers. She is also available for traditional music history and lesson inquiries.

Matthew Kelly

Pottery



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www.pinehurstpottery.com/category-s/1873.htm

www.facebook.com/matthewkellypottery

Instagram: @matthewkellypottery

Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC19npAMIfG47wgdrFX--4zw/featured>

PIEDMONT

MATTHEW KELLY has made a staggering number of pots, both independently and working for others. Beginning his career as a production potter when he was a teenager, Kelly has spent 25 years engaging in a distinctly Seagrove pottery tradition that values functional design, prizing simple ornamentation and strong forms made quickly, proficiently, and consistently. The demand of producing thousands of pots has instilled in Kelly a fixation not only on being able to create the perfect shape, but also on having the control to alter conventional shapes with precise intention. "I want to make really nice pieces," says Kelly, "and if I change them in one way or another, I want it to be because I chose to, not because . . . I'm trying to cover something that's ugly."

After spending the first seven years of his life in New York, Kelly and his family moved to NC. With a recommendation from his middle school art teacher, Kelly was among only six students permitted to take art class as high school freshmen. There, his teacher, Mike Durham, helped expose Kelly to ceramics. This exposure led to a passion, and at sixteen, he got his first job for noteworthy Seagrove potteries Holly Hill and J. B. Cole. During the next 25 years, Kelly has spent the majority of his career in doing production pottery for other potters, a venerable tradition in its own right. Recent years have seen him expand into selling his own work. His ceramics have been featured at the Mint Museum Potters Market Invitational, the Catawba Valley Pottery and Antiques Festival, and the Celebration of Seagrove Potters.

Though Kelly is committed to developing his own unique style through his wood-firing and salt-glazing techniques, he still values the atmosphere of collaboration and mutual inspiration in his pottery community. "I'm honored to think someone would like my work enough that they would take inspiration from it and make something," he remarks. "Cause, honestly, that's how I feel about other people's work."

AVAILABILITY

Matthew Kelly's pottery can purchase by visiting Pinehurst Pottery or contacting him through matthewkellypottery.com. Kelly also runs a YouTube channel featuring pottery tutorials.

Austin Koerner

Bluegrass | Mandolin



Bunnlevel, Harnett County, NC

agkoerner@gmail.com

COASTAL PLAIN

AUSTIN KOERNER first heard bluegrass music as a child in his native Harnett County, during a concert by fellow North Carolinian Jimmy Cameron. Koerner remembers being impressed by a man "with slicked-back hair, in a suit, playing this really cool instrument."

At the age of 16 he switched from the drums to the mandolin. For several years he listened intensively to Bill Monroe and other traditional bluegrass mandolinists, as well as to progressive innovators like David Grisman and Chris Thile. Further breakthroughs came from listening to Adam Steffey, Alan Bibey, and especially Wayne Benson. Though entirely self-taught on the mandolin, Koerner cites the importance of the support of the bluegrass community he discovered, particularly in Harnett, Alamance, and Chatham counties.

Koerner played with the band Nu Blue for four years, spending 250 days on the road each year. He had the opportunity, while with Nu Blue, to record with soul legend Sam Moore, known for "Soul Man," "When Something is Wrong With My Baby," and other hits of the 1960s. Koerner is currently taking some time off from the road. In addition to working and playing music, he is pursuing his passion for fishing and fly-tying.

AVAILABILITY

Austin Koerner will consider invitations for performances.

Jessie Lang / The Lang Sisters

Jessica and Chloe Lang
Americana | Bluegrass



Photo: Rachel Jessen

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"Wayfaring Stranger"

www.carolinacountry.com/extras/carolina-music/wayfaring-stranger

"Cascade"

<https://youtu.be/mBBB4UXYsvs>

PIEDMONT

THE LANG SISTERS borrow from the folk, gospel, and bluegrass traditions to create a fresh acoustic sound all their own. Mentored by many talented musicians in Piedmont area jams, they thrived when they joined the Chatham County Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program and went on to form their own award winning band. They have performed at MerleFest, IBMA Wide Open Bluegrass, the NC State Fair, the NC Museum of History, among other venues. They were also featured on the PBS series *Song of the Mountains*, from Marion, Virginia. They have been featured in Carolina Country Magazine, and their version of "Wayfaring Stranger" was chosen for the magazine's Digital Music selection in 2018.

JESSICA is a talented singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist whose passion for music excellence is undeniable. She has won multiple guitar, vocal and ensemble performance awards at competitions throughout NC and Va., and was named an endorsing artist for Preston Thompson Guitars as well as Shubb Capos. She has been selected as the Tar Heel of the Week by the *Raleigh News and Observer*. She also plays mandolin and is a member of the elite IBMA Kids on Bluegrass program, performing at various IBMA stages throughout the annual festival in Raleigh. Jessie is a founding member and lead guitar player for the Carolina PineCones bluegrass band, plays jazz guitar with her high school band, and also performs with her high school choral ensemble and a capella club. With Chloe now away at college, Jessica also performs as a solo artist and has emerged as a talented songwriter. Jessica serves as the student director for the Wake Forest Children's Choir and has served as a teacher's assistant at PineCone's summer music camps.

CHLOE is a rhythm guitar player and vocalist for the duet. Fascinated by the history of traditional music with a special interest in arts education, she served as a summer camp counselor and teacher at JAM summer music camps and PineCone music camps. She is currently attending Appalachian State University pursuing an advertising degree with an emphasis in arts management. She also served as secretary and managed events with the Heritage Council at Appalachian State, helping to educate the student body about traditional music and Appalachian heritage. Chloe also plays piano, percussion, and has been a member of Meredith College's Chorale, a premiere vocal performing ensemble.

AVAILABILITY

Jessie Lang is available for solo performances and workshops and can form an ensemble upon request. Due to Chloe's college relocation, the Lang Sisters are occasionally available for select performances.

Lucy Llong

Fiber art | Anthropology | Family Archives



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PIEDMONT

LLUCY LLONG is a visual anthropologist and family archivist originally from Atlanta, Ga. Her work explores and examines the Spirit, culture, and traditions of original descendants of the African diaspora. Through sculpture, digital media, and textiles, she preserves heirlooms from the past, archives the present, and creates artifacts for the future.

Llong writes that, "Though records have been destroyed, languages have been lost, and traditions have been diluted, one thing remains untouched, and that is the Spirit that lives within all original descendants of the African diaspora." Lucy's work traces this Spirit, specifically as it manifests within the Black American family. Using ancient and traditional mediums such as sculpture and fiber art, she takes on the role of visual anthropologist/archivist, seeking to restore past traditions and build legacy through the creation of reimagined heirlooms and artifacts. It is her hope that future generations will uncover these relics and use them as figurative and functional tools of honor and remembrance, symbolizing who we were, who we are, and who we will be.

Llong has been a contributing artist for Atlanta-based publications such as *Floromancy* and *Color ATL*. In 2017, her work was included in the library of curatorial collective, *Present Futures*, for *Open Engagement* in Chicago, which is an artist-led initiative focusing on socially engaged art. Lucy's current work focuses on an initiative called *Ascend Together In Power*, which is a nostalgic approach to the restoration of Black American families through the lens of lineage reflection, introspection, and future building.

Her work has been shared and exhibited at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY; the University of Illinois at Chicago; and the North Carolina Museum of Art. Llong currently lives in the foothills of North Carolina's western Piedmont, the native land of her maternal family.

AVAILABILITY

Lucy Llong is available for exhibitions and publications. Her work may be purchased for collection on her website.

Charly Lowry

Soul | Rock | Gospel | Country | Activism | Lumbee music



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"Music at the Manison: Charly Lowry & Friends"

<https://youtu.be/VG3Ua1zw5C8>

COASTAL PLAIN

CHARLY LOWRY is a singer-songwriter from the Lumbee Indian ancestral homelands of swampy Robeson County, NC. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies from UNC Chapel Hill, where she performed with the Motown soul band Mr. Coffee and the Creamers. That experience set her on a lifelong path of music, leading her to front the spiritual rock and soul band, Dark Water Rising and later embark on a solo career. Dark Water Rising was formed as the opening act for the *Strike at the Wind* outdoor drama performed during Lumbee Homecoming. "I have flashbacks to going to school in Chapel Hill and people still not realizing that there are Native Americans still living," Lowry says. "There were some people that didn't know that Natives still existed on top of you, having one of the largest indigenous populations east of the Mississippi an hour and a half away from here, so it was important to tell them who I was, my story, my upbringing, our beliefs."

Lowry has also performed with The Ulali Project, a revival of the famous First Nations female acapella group, Ulali. In 2004, Lowry was a semi-finalist on American Idol, and in 2019 she performed with a band of Native artists at the Executive Mansion in Raleigh for the Music at the Mansion series.

Lowry's music is an act of advocacy for Lumbee and Native American rights. She sings from a place of rootedness in family, community, and heritage. In 2017 Lowry returned to Pembroke, the hub of the Lumbee tribe in North Carolina, to care for her ailing mother and manage her own treatment for health issues she has battled since her teenage years. Being back on that land and continuing to sing kept her strong both spiritually and physically. In the wake of her mother's passing, Lowry emerged determined to dedicate her time to music and the creative process. Her style has branched out, embracing parts of her identity that she had not explored in the past, like her church raising and her country roots, evident in her Robeson County accent. "You're gonna hear some rap in my lyrics, you're gonna hear a thumping kick drum, you're gonna hear some soul and I just think that should be a representative of Robeson County, and that we're a multi-racial county," Lowry says. "It's important for me as a musician growing up here to have all of those genres represented and there in my music."

AVAILABILITY

Charly Lowry will consider invitations to perform as a solo artist and with her band.

Ashley “Milli” Lumpkin

Spoken word



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"At Home and Abroad"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfLNrSe0ZoA>

"Covenant"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMBJHkY8kQ>

PIEDMONT

When spoken word poet **ASHLEY "MILLI" LUMPKIN** performs, she conjures a world in which life's glories and grievances are confronted as complements. The allegory of Noah's Ark slips into an account of domestic violence. A mother prepares the bread to be broken for Communion, and a daughter offers her body to be broken for a bone marrow transplant. "A New Testament in bone ground to the dust for the honor of wearing your face." An ordained preacher and math teacher, Lumpkin considers herself a changer of fates. Her poems show that fates change only when one faces them.

Born in Hephzibah, Ga., and now based in Greensboro, Lumpkin exemplifies the region's poetry slam traditions. With Piedmont SLAM and Bull City Slam Team, she has competed in multiple Southern Fried Poetry Slam finals. She placed 6th at the 2018 Women of the World Poetry Slam. She has headlined shows at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Davidson College, and Rutgers University, and appeared on the Button Poetry YouTube channel. Her debut full-length collection, #AshleyLumpkin, arrived in 2017.

For Lumpkin, the power of performance lies in how it confirms the work put into the words. "You can prepare a sermon," she says. "But there's something different when you're standing in the pulpit and people are saying 'Amen!' with you. All this work I've put in is not in vain. It's touching the people. It's reaching the people."

AVAILABILITY

Lumpkin can be booked for a variety of solo performances—open mics, poetry slam features, festivals, conferences etc. She can also provide services as an editor, and she can lead, organize, and contribute as a featured speaker on creative writing workshops and literary arts panels.

Saro Lynch-Thomason

Balladry



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www.sarosings.com

MOUNTAINS

"There's a real beauty in understanding that many songs have been passed from body to body for so many generations," says Asheville ballad singer **SARO LYNCH-THOMASON**. "If the song is about heartbreak or deeply, devastatingly missing someone, I feel affirmed in having those strong feelings because I know someone 800 years ago felt the same thing. And many people in between had to as well for the song to survive." Both as a scholar and practitioner, Lynch-Thomason approaches a ballad cognizant not only of how it has traveled across centuries, but how it lives today. Whether she is reinterpreting an old English ballad or composing her own song in the tradition, her performances summon the echo of time, honoring the history of balladry by reinforcing how people—alone or together—continue to "use these songs in a way that speaks to [their] struggles and [their] experiences."

Growing up in Nashville, Tenn., in a family with deep connections to Appalachia and the folk revival movement, Lynch-Thomason began teaching herself ballads at an early age, piqued by her Unitarian Universalist choir director's incorporation of traditional song, like shape note singing, into the choir's repertoire. Attending Bard College later introduced her to a singing community where she could share and discuss balladry, and upon graduating, wishing both to return the South and live in an area with active heritage singers and ballad-singing traditions, she decided to relocate to Asheville.

Today, having built friendships with (and garnered praise from) Appalachian ballad singers such as Sheila Kay Adams and Bobby McMillon, Lynch-Thomason has built an impressive career singing, teaching, and studying ballads. In 2012, she and Jordan Freeman co-produced *Blair Pathways: A Musical Exploration of America's Largest Labor Uprising*, a collection of twenty-five contemporary covers of protest songs that tell the story of West Virginia's Coal Mine Wars. Her 2013 solo album *Vessel* contains a dynamic mix of Appalachian ballads, camp meeting tunes, and Irish and African American church songs. Dedicated to the perpetuation and proliferation of balladry, she also provides a variety of workshops, cultivating "a body-to-body practice" and prioritizing the "oral tradition of sitting around and learning ballads face to face, and talking about the ballads and what is going on in these songs and what they mean."

AVAILABILITY

Lynch-Thomason is accepting requests for shows—either solo or with her Celtic band, Émigré—and workshops.

Levi Mahan

Pottery



Whynot and Seagrove, Randolph County, NC

(336) 480-7808

levi.mahan@gmail.com

www.levimahan.com

Instagram: @levi_mahan

PIEDMONT

Seagrove potter **LEVI MAHAN**'s work speaks to a single virtue: commitment. From the clay he sources to the shapes he forms at the wheel, Mahan strives to embed the character of Randolph County into ceramics. Drawing from the natural environment and the influences of his community's traditional potters, Mahan creates wood-fired pieces that unite decoration and function. Sinuous, flowering vines curve along the edge of a jug or spiral around the belly of a bowl. Ridges on a carved flask recall the rough, organic texture of untreated clay. That's commitment to Seagrove's natural environment—as material and inspiration.

Son to NC potters Jane Braswell and Michael Mahan, Levi Mahan intended to pursue engineering, but encouragement (and chastisement) from his college art instructors convinced him of his talent at the turning wheel. "It was a big realization to think about doing what my parents did," Mahan remembers, "because that was just never an option, in my head." Choosing that once-thought-impossible option has led Mahan to much acclaim in his burgeoning career. In 2016, he opened his own pottery in an 1830's cabin that his parents once renovated. His work has been featured at the 2017 National Folk Festival and in the book *Controlled Burn: Wood-Fired Pottery in Seagrove*.

"In twenty-five years' time," says Mahan, "I moved a quarter mile." His art may not have taken Mahan far away, but it has brought him closer to Seagrove, its history and traditions as robust and dynamic as the clay.

AVAILABILITY

In addition to commissions and pottery orders, Mahan is interested in artist-in-residence positions both inside and outside the state of North Carolina.

Eck McCanless

Pottery



Seagrove, Randolph County, NC

eck@rtmc.net

6077 Old U.S. Highway 220
Seagrove, NC 27341

eckmccanless.webs.com

PIEDMONT

The son of potters, **ECK MCCANLESS** grew up in the pottery-making community of Seagrove. In operation since the early 1980s, his parents' shop, Dover Pottery, has been in business longer than most of the scores of ceramics workshops in and around the small Randolph County town. McCanless began to learn the art form himself when he was 10 years old, and at 18 became a professional potter at his family's shop. He opened his own business, Eck McCanless Pottery, in 2011.

Though a master of many pottery techniques, McCanless is best known for his crystalline and agateware pots. Crystalline pottery features flower-like bursts of zinc crystals, the product of a specialized firing process and a glaze of zinc, silica, and ground glass to which metallic oxides are added. McCanless makes agateware by turning different colors of clay together, creating vessels with swirling swaths of color. Some pots he leaves uncarved because of the inherent beauty of the patterns; others he carves to manipulate the patterns, creating an effect somewhat like that of fine marbled paper. Beautiful and distinctive, McCanless's pottery has been featured in numerous publications and galleries.

AVAILABILITY

Eck McCanless sells his work through his shop and his website. He will consider requests for demonstrations.

Trevor McKenzie

Old-time | Fiddle



Deep Gap, Watauga County, NC

(828) 406-0766

mckenziejt@appstate.edu

trevormckenzie.com

MOUNTAINS

TREVOR MCKENZIE crossed the border from his Southwest Va. home to Deep Gap, NC, where he has played fiddle, banjo, and guitar for local string bands and taught in the Boone Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program. McKenzie came up in a cattle farming family, and although he meant to leave farm work behind, the history of the agricultural society that surrounded him became a source of respect for his community and its musical traditions.

McKenzie's early interest in music was nurtured both at home and in the church, and was honed by training at Jim Lloyd's Barbershop, a storefront musical gathering place in Rural Retreat, Va. North Carolina and Virginia share a musical tradition along their mountain border, and in Deep Gap McKenzie continues to learn and teach not only the old-time repertoire, but also those stories of place, work, and community which so strongly connect traditional music to the social and economic experiences of those who make it. A keeper of traditional culture in more ways than one, McKenzie is an archivist in the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University, where he works to preserve field recordings, ballad collections, and other materials related to the history of the Appalachian region.

AVAILABILITY

Trevor McKenzie is available for performances with the Elkville String Band, as a solo artist, or with other string band lineups. He is also available for teaching and workshops.

Sam McKinney

Old-time | Bluegrass



Spruce Pine, Mitchell County, NC
samuelmckinney18@yahoo.com

MOUNTAINS

SAM MCKINNEY has deep roots in his native Altapass, NC, where his ancestor Charlie McKinney owned great swaths of land and begat a famously large host of children. Sam has always had an interest in making music. "Ever since I was little, I wanted to play something," he says. Everyone in his family played "old-timey stuff," and early on, McKinney's mother Debbie encouraged him to take piano lessons. But it was the guitar that McKinney really took to, and he received a guitar for Christmas when he was six years old. "I just wanted to pick it up and play," he says.

For several years McKinney has taken music lessons from one of Mitchell County's most celebrated musicians, Rhonda Gouge, whom he cites as his biggest musical influence. "Sometimes when we are playing together I'll ask her if she wants me to take a break here, or hold off, and she'll say, 'Brother, just do what the Lord lays on your heart.'" McKinney also greatly admires the music of the late Doc Watson. "With Doc, it's fun music, something that brings people together. People of totally opposing views can sing along."

McKinney performs locally in the Toe River Valley with his father Greg McKinney, and also at times with Rhonda Gouge and others at venues throughout the region. McKinney wishes that more of his peers were interested in old-time or bluegrass music, but he believes there will always be "people that are going to be interested in this music."

AVAILABILITY

Sam McKinney will consider invitations to perform in the Toe River Valley region and beyond.

Le'Andra McPhatter-Williams

Jazz | Gospel | R&B



Photo: Denise Allen

Durham, Durham County, NC

(919) 381-4469

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info@leandramusicstudio.com

www.leandramcphatter.com

www.journeymusicacademync.com

PIEDMONT

LE'ANDRA MCPHATTER-WILLIAMS is a pianist from Kinston, a town in eastern NC whose reputation for great jazz and R&B music exceeds its size. Writing and arranging music for jazz trios, gospel artists, and concert bands, McPhatter-Williams's versatility is itself a testament to the cultural interconnections of jazz, gospel, R&B, and classical music. She believes that the most beautiful thing about music is that it allows people to share their world with strangers, creating an intimate, undeniable connection.

Raised in a family of singers and musicians, McPhatter-Williams became a musician at the age of three. Like many gospel, R&B, and jazz artists, she got her start in the church, playing piano for Sunday services in her hometown. McPhatter-Williams was a member of Kinston's Traditional Arts Programs for Students (TAPS) jazz band, before becoming an instructor in the program. She went on to pursue independent studies in music theory and notation, and received her degree in Music from the illustrious Jazz Studies program at North Carolina Central University. Living in the wellspring of North Carolina's jazz heritage, McPhatter-Williams has become a music educator, founding her own teaching studio in Durham while continuing to minister at her local church. "I'm up for any challenge that creates love," she has said of finding her place in the music industry. McPhatter-Williams has performed with artists like Branford Marsalis, Kierra Sheard, and Shana Tucker, spreading the word to audiences across the country about eastern North Carolina's deep tradition of gospel, R&B, and jazz. Today, she lives and works in Durham, NC where she teaches through her music school, Journey Music Academy.

AVAILABILITY

Le'Andra McPhatter Williams will consider invitations for performances and workshops. She offers both in-studio and at-home piano and voice lessons through her business, Journey Music Academy. She will also facilitate workshops and field trips and offer songwriting consultations.

Tim McWilliams

Old-time | Bluegrass | Blues



Asheville, Buncombe County, NC

tmcwilliams.music@gmail.com

www.tmcwilliamsmusic.com

MOUNTAINS

Gifted at both the flat-picking and finger-picking guitar styles, **TIM MCWILLIAMS** plays across the spectrum of traditional Appalachian music. Whether it's old-time, bluegrass, or country blues, he can make a standard tune shimmer, or build upon the tradition with an original composition. Like his hero Doc Watson, McWilliams honors the musical traditions that define a place by reveling in how they blend and blur together.

Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, McWilliams moved to Boone to pursue his masters degree at Appalachian State University. Attending class and local jam sessions immersed McWilliams in the old-time music community. As years passed, the generosity of mentors and peers helped him pick up the tunes and etiquette. "[I was] just trying to learn at the feet of all the peers I saw doing stuff that I wanted to do," he remembers.

As solo performer, front man of the Tim McWilliams Band, and educator, McWilliams has quickly fostered a career rooted in honoring place and passing down tradition. Endorsed by Larrivae Guitars, he has performed at regional festivals like LEAF, Fall for Greenville, and the Downtown Asheville Independence Day Celebration; released an album (*Don't Be Bashful* under the name Redleg Husky); and become a faculty member at the Academy for the Arts, where he teaches banjo, mandolin, guitar, and ukulele.

For an artist who once played 250 shows across the Southeast in one year, McWilliams understands the necessity of feeling rooted. "I think that a sense of place is important today because everything moves so fast." Settled down in Asheville with his family, he hopes to become "a local resource" like his mentors before him, working to pass down the state's musical traditions and build up his community as a performer, peer, and--especially--teacher. "It would be awesome if one of my students went to a jam, and they were playing real good. [And someone said,] 'Oh yeah, that person takes lessons with Tim!'"

AVAILABILITY

McWilliams is available as a solo performer or with his group the Tim McWilliams Band. He can provide private banjo, mandolin, or guitar lessons, particularly in bluegrass flatpicking, Travis picking, and Delta and country blues fingerpicking.

Shelby Rae Moore

Blues | Soul | Americana



Caldwell County, NC

(828) 758-7972 (home)

(828) 851-3535 (cell)

shelby.moore2015@gmail.com

shelbyraemoore.com

MOUNTAINS

SHELBY RAE MOORE is a versatile singer who performs a mix of blues, soul, and Americana. Her native Caldwell County has a tradition of genre-crossing music, with deep roots both in blues and country music. It's only natural that Moore would cite Etta James, Jerry Reed, and Bonnie Raitt as influences on her own music. She has said, "When it comes to music, I'm all over the board. I like everything."

A member of a musical family, Moore grew up singing with her grandparents, uncle, and cousins. Grandfather Cecil Palmer is a renowned thumb-style guitar player, and the well-known Caldwell County duo the Harris Brothers are her cousins. She has grown into an experienced professional, who plays engagements throughout Western North Carolina and beyond.

Moore leads her own band, The Shelby Rae Moore Band, with members including her uncles Chet and Bret Palmer, both guitarists, and percussionist Andrew Fultz.

AVAILABILITY

The Shelby Rae Moore Band is available for performances at concerts, festivals, weddings, and other events and venues.

Sally Anne Morgan

House and Land | The Back Porch Pickers
Old-time | Printmaking



Asheville, Buncombe County, NC

(540) 557-7900

sallyannemorgan@gmail.com

sallyannemorgan.com

www.ratbeepress.com

"Rainbow 'mid Life's Willows"

<https://youtu.be/FdKkshrpCVg>

"Wagoner's Lad"

<https://youtu.be/AQI60E-F60o>

MOUNTAINS

SALLY ANNE MORGAN plays haunting psychedelic Appalachian folk drone that invokes the rhododendron thickets, creeks, and mountains of her local landscape in Western North Carolina. Morgan plays with the Black Twig Pickers and House and Land, both groups that have been established as dedicated practitioners of traditional music re-cast and shaped by appreciation for modern improvisation, minimalism, micro-tonality and drone-based music from across the globe. Thriving in the in-betweenness of two worlds, Morgan is among those who prove that the exploration of the outmost bounds of sound and the exploration of the ancientness rooted in traditional music aren't as different as one might think. She weaves her fiddle and banjo playing with voice, percussion, and other drone elements to create something that spans both the ecstatic abandon and the spacious simplicity that music can have.

AVAILABILITY

Sally Anne Morgan is available for performances with House and Land, and for engagements as a banjo or fiddle player. She is also a printmaker at www.ratbeepress.com.

Shaquim Muldrow

Jazz saxophone



Photo: Bishop Ortega

Durham, Durham County, NC

(919) 591-1823

shaquimlm@yahoo.com

"Alley Cat"

https://youtu.be/XXHhomkM_p4

PIEDMONT

For Triangle-based tenor saxophonist **SHAQUIM MULDROW**, respect for the music is not just a virtue. It's also an aesthetic. Whether he is approaching a foundational John Coltrane tune, interpreting a classic Al Green love song, or performing an original composition, the few moments of a slick solo belie the many hours of not only practicing, but "listening to [the greats] and [understanding] the struggle of all the people who've played jazz." It means reading how Eric Dolphy would spend hours practicing a single note. It means researching networks of collaboration scattered across album liner notes. In short, when Muldrow blows, the awareness of a tradition flows through every note.

Born in Sumter, South Carolina, Muldrow began absorbing jazz at an early age. Though not musicians, his family were music-lovers. His mother played John Coltrane and Sarah Vaughn, and his father gave him CDs of Joe Williams and Dizzy Gillespie, and this immersion in the sound of jazz giants compelled Muldrow to take up an instrument.

Initially studying music education at Claflin University in Orangeburg, SC, Muldrow transferred to North Carolina Central University's jazz studies program at the encouragement of a professor. There, Muldrow apprenticed under instructors who were pupils of the artists who inspired Muldrow as a child. He studied jazz as both genre and tradition, and learned to identify by ear the chord changes of unfamiliar tunes called out in jam sessions.

Muldrow's dedication to his craft has resulted in an impressive résumé. He's performed at the Lincoln Center with the NCCU Jazz Band, played with the B.B. King Blues Club at Sea, and busked at Art of Cool. When not composing his first album, he leads the Shaquim Muldrow Quartet, gigging across the Triangle area and Charlotte.

Muldrow roots his craft in lessons his mentors have taught him—respecting the music and acknowledging the lineage carried from generation to generation. "When you listen to somebody, they were listening to somebody else," Muldrow emphasizes. "When you listen to Charlie Parker, he was checking out Lester Young really heavy. [My teachers] taught [me] the importance of looking back and not just being an island."

AVAILABILITY

Shaquim Muldrow is available for performances, either solo or with his group the Shaquim Muldrow Quartet.

Donna Ray Norton

Balladry



Madison County, NC

(828) 776-1289

donnaraynorton@gmail.com

"Mathy Groves"

<https://youtu.be/9aCoXZ6-pnw>

"The Farmer's Curst Wife"

<https://youtu.be/jjXMsAe6Ayg>

MOUNTAINS

DONNA RAY NORTON is from the Madison County community of Sodom Laurel, home to what is arguably the most famous tradition of ballad singing in the Appalachian mountains. She is a member of a group of interconnected families—among them the Norton, Ray, Ramsey, Chandler, and Wallin families—who are keepers of a heritage of balladry and instrumental music that dates back hundreds of years.

Despite growing up in this music-rich environment, it was not until she was in high school, and researching a senior project on ballads, that Donna Ray became interested in singing the old "love songs," as ballads are sometimes known. In the years since, she has learned balladry from family and neighbors, and become a renowned singer herself. She represents the eighth generation of her family known to be ballad singers.

Donna Ray has traveled widely to share her community's music. She was featured at the 50th annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, DC, in 2017, and has performed at the Berkeley Old Time Music Festival in California. Closer to home, she often performs at such events as the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, Mars Hill University Heritage Day, and the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival where, in 2005, she received the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Youth Award for Balladry. She has recorded three albums to date, and is featured on the Grammy-nominated compilation *Big Bend Killing: The Appalachian Ballad Tradition*. Donna Ray keeps up a busy performance schedule throughout the region, but Madison County remains her home.

AVAILABILITY

Donna Ray Norton will consider invitations for performances and ballad swaps.

Bayle Owens

Jugtown Pottery
Pottery | Fiber crafts



Seagrove, Randolph County, NC

(910) 464-3266

baylemowens@gmail.com

www.jugtownware.com

<https://www.facebook.com/Jugtown-Pottery-166637096682981/>

PIEDMONT

BAYLE OWENS made her first pot at her family's storied Jugtown Pottery when she was two years old, and went on to earn degrees in craft and fiber art at Warren Wilson College and Haywood Community College, respectively. Jugtown Pottery has been a mainstay of the Seagrove pottery community since its founding in 1917 by Jacque and Julianna Busbee, who helped grow the region of longstanding local clay traditions into an internationally recognized pottery center. The Owens family (along with the related Owen family) has been an important part of the history of Seagrove pottery since J.H. Owen became the first potter to work at Jugtown in the early 1900s.

Since 2012, Bayle Owens has worked alongside her brother, Travis Owens, and parents, Vernon and Pamela Owens turning pots and helping manage the business as a family team. Five years ago, Owens helped establish a new, popular annual event: Pumpkins at Jugtown. Each October, the family creates seasonal pumpkins, gourds, and jack-o-lanterns available for sale only at this special event. While Owens might be known for her pumpkins, she also stresses that as part of Jugtown, each family member works within a trusted, recognizable aesthetic. "We each have our own shapes," she explains. "But we're really working towards the idea that people can come to Jugtown and anything they get will fit into the Jugtown look." As she develops her style within the Jugtown tradition, fourth-generation potter Owens encourages Jugtown to continue to reach new, younger customers through opportunities like Pumpkins at Jugtown and other special efforts. Owens also works in fiber arts, and her textiles can be found beside the pottery at Jugtown.

AVAILABILITY

Bayle Owens' pottery and fiber crafts can be found at Jugtown Pottery in Seagrove, NC and online at the Jugtown website. Jugtown Pottery is open year round, Tuesday - Saturday - 8:30-5:00.

Travis Owens

Jugtown Pottery
Pottery



Seagrove, Randolph County, NC

(910) 464-3266

travis@jugtownware.com

www.jugtownware.com

<https://www.facebook.com/Jugtown-Pottery-166637096682981/>

PIEDMONT

TRAVIS OWENS, son of Vernon and Pamela Owens, always knew he would make his living as a potter. His ancestor J.H. Owen was the first local potter to work at Jugtown Pottery in 1917, before the business was eventually taken over by his family. Descendants of the Owens (and Owen) family can be found turning pots all over the Seagrove region, which has fostered a local pottery tradition since the 18th century thanks to the land's good clay and abundant timber for firewood. Owens was born into that legacy of clay. He began turning when he was two, and his parents and uncle Bobby Owens instilled the Jugtown Pottery values in him from that young age: "There is no compromise on anything," he explains. The clay is blended onsite, the Jugtown kilns were built by hand, Pamela formulates the glazes, and the shapes adhere to a standard of craftsmanship, beauty, and functionality.

Beyond his family training, Owens holds a BA in Art and Design from North Carolina State University—and he also considers historical ceramics to be mentors in their own right: "Even though I don't know those [potters], I can look at the pots and get ideas about what they did and how they were using clay." Owens acknowledges the great changes to the pottery industry the last 30 years have wrought, but he is encouraged that a wide variety of people are learning the craft, younger people are buying their tableware from Jugtown, and more than ever, people are interested in visiting the pottery for special events. On the heels of celebrating Jugtown's 100th anniversary in 2017, Owens knows Jugtown will continue to balance its values with a willingness to evolve—but, as he says, "We're not going to do anything that's not Jugtown...the main thing is to maintain the place, the feel, the pots, the way it feels now."

AVAILABILITY

Travis Owens' pottery can be found at Jugtown Pottery in Seagrove, NC and online at the Jugtown website. Jugtown Pottery is open year round, Tuesday - Saturday - 8:30-5:00.

PAT Junior

Hip-hop



Raleigh, Wake County, NC

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iampatjunior@gmail.com

www.iampatjunior.com

www.iampatjunior.bandcamp.com

"love to self // validation"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kYj5qZWP5>

"better days."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsskSE2vmQk&feature=youtu.be>

PIEDMONT

Born in Brooklyn, **PAT JUNIOR (PATRICK DARIUS MIX, JR.)** has lived in North Carolina since he was a teenager. His introduction to hip hop happened through his mother. A talented poet and church singer, she exposed PAT to foundational hip hop artists like Notorious B.I.G. and A Tribe Called Quest. "I remember being really young and having a tape recorder, and taking a little stereo and playing beats and rapping over my tape recorder and making my own mixtapes," PAT recalls. Yet despite growing up in a musical household and collaborating with several hip hop collectives, PAT only committed to his art form full-time during the fall of 2016 when, after being laid off, he decided to give his dream a shot. Since 2016's *Learning To Live (In A Day)*, PAT Junior has positioned himself as a key figure in Raleigh and Durham's emergent independent rap scene, creating his own work and collaborating with other artists as a beatmaker and music video director. He has been featured in *Indy Week*. He has performed at Hopscotch Festival. "I've had the most success doing this than [I have] working a 9-to-5 job."

That success doesn't just reflect his ability to pay the bills. It also reflects his music's participation in a cosmopolitan community of Triangle hip hop artists who are striving to chart careers on their terms. "I'm not in it for the money. I'm not in it for the fame," insists PAT. "I don't have to blow up and be huge. I do want to do what I love, musically, and take care of my family and make a good living doing it. . . . But definitely more than anything I want to be able to impact and influence people positively with what I'm doing, whether it's the average listener or another artist, and encourage them to put out great-quality content."

AVAILABILITY

PAT Junior is interested in booking for concerts, festivals, and other live opportunities. He is available to produce music, direct videos, and conduct sound design.

Jared Payton

Jared L. Payton & The Voices
Gospel vocals | Choir directing | Classical vocals



Spring Lake, Cumberland County, NC

(910) 257-0931

jaredpayton22@gmail.com

"You're All I Want"

https://youtu.be/SWjg3vNJo_U

"Where Is Your Faith"

<https://youtu.be/gmttKjdk7bg>

COASTAL PLAIN

JARED PAYTON is an artist whose work spans multiple genres and disciplines of music. He is an accomplished choir director, the leader of the award-winning vocal group Jared L. Payton and the Voices. A classically trained baritone, the Fayetteville State University music graduate has performed in operas from an early age, starring in the title role of Amahl and the Night Visitors at the age of 11, and appearing at age 18 as the First Armed Man in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at Fayetteville State.

Payton grew up singing in church, and gospel music is part of his family heritage. His mother, Denise Murchison Payton—who is, like Jared, a classically trained vocalist, as well as a music educator at Fayetteville State University—serves as minister of music at the family's home church. His father, Jackie Payton, is a church elder whose own musical path has spanned both R&B and gospel. With roots in both his home church and the classical stage, Payton keeps a foot in both worlds. "My saying," Payton explains, is that "smaller congregations and smaller audiences need good singing just as much as the big."

Payton brings these varied musical talents together in his work as the director of Jared L. Payton and the Voices. The multi-denominational choir's members come from throughout central North Carolina. They perform music in genres that range from contemporary praise and worship to the tradition of classically arranged African American spirituals pioneered by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Jared L. Payton and the Voices have won the Carolina's Best gospel competition in multiple years.

AVAILABILITY

In addition to solo and choir performances, Payton offers choir-training workshops. He has a special interest in working with smaller congregations to develop their choirs.

Cecilia Polanco

So Good Pupas for Education
Foodways | Activism



Durham, Durham County, NC

www.sogoodpupas.com

PIEDMONT

At 25, **CECILIA POLANCO** owns and manages So Good Pupas, a social justice food truck serving Salvadorian pupusas, and Pupas for Education, a non-profit that awards college scholarships for undocumented students. Born in California and raised in Durham, Polanco was the second student in twenty years to graduate from Durham's Northern High School as a UNC Chapel Hill Morehead-Cain Scholar. She took full advantage of the opportunity and embraced her Latina identity as she learned about social entrepreneurship, cultural capital, social justice, and engaged with the Campus Y and UNC's CUBE program (Creating University-Born Entrepreneurs). "It took a village to get me to where I was," she explains. "Not everyone has that, especially undocumented students."

At 18, Polanco resolved to use her time at UNC to establish a business to generate funding for undocumented student scholarships. Her mom's traditional-style pupusas were the backbone of special occasions growing up, and Polanco began to take note of how much her friends loved trying them for the first time. "I found that food was a really great way to introduce them to a different culture," she explains. Polanco set out to apprentice in the art of pupusa making with her mother, and, seven years after her initial idea took root, the two now work side-by-side as full-time employees for So Good Pupas. Polanco says she is still putting in the time to perfect her own pupusa technique, but she "hopes to eventually add more southern touches, because that's also bringing my whole self to it, not just my Salvadorian-ness, but also my American-ness, and my southern-ness." Pupas for Education now distributes up to \$8,000 a year in scholarships. Through internships in both the for- and non-profit side of the business, Polanco also gives students the chance to develop business skills in the real world.

AVAILABILITY

You can find So Good Pupas each Thursday for lunch and dinner at the Latino Community Credit Union in downtown Durham, or hire them to cater your next event.

The Pressley Girls

Corie and Katie Pressley
Old-time | Folk | Bluegrass | Gospel | Country



Brasstown, Clay and Cherokee Counties, NC

(828) 342-6996

thepressleygirls@gmail.com

www.thepressleygirls.com

<https://www.facebook.com/thepressleygirls/>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/ThePressleyGirls>

Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thepressleygirls>

MOUNTAINS

THE PRESSLEY GIRLS are fourth generation musicians from Brasstown, NC. The pair perform as a duo as well as with their uncle Paul and sometimes other family members. They play a mixture of folk, bluegrass, gospel, and country.

Corie and Katie Pressley were born into a very musical family in Cherokee County. Their grandfather Jerry "Pap" Wilson wrote many original songs and was awarded a North Carolina Heritage Award along with his brother Ray. The duo performed and recorded widely as the Wilson Brothers, and now Corie and Katie are carrying on the tradition with their own tight harmonies.

Corie first tried the fiddle, but later moved to guitar. Katie then took up the fiddle as, she says, "the dog definitely wasn't playing it." Their grandfather and uncle Paul helped them along, but they also found Youtube a great tool for improving their craft. Recently, the duo have begun writing their own tunes and songs. After Pap passed away, Katie composed a beautiful tune called "Spiderweb Canyon," as a tribute to her grandfather.

The pair cites a number of influences, aside from family. Corie lists Merle Haggard, Marty Robbins, George Jones, and Tammy Wynette. Katie enjoys Eddie Rabbit, Gene Watson, John Conley, and Band of Horses and "doesn't really listen to new music." The Pressley sisters perform at the John C. Campbell Folk School and at regional festivals. They look forward to taking their talents further from home, but also want to "keep it a family thing--local."

AVAILABILITY

The Pressley Girls are available for concerts, private events, workshops, and presentations on Appalachia. They also offer lessons in person and over Skype.

Liam Purcell

Old-time | Bluegrass



Deep Gap, Watauga County, NC

liampurcellmusic@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/liam.purcell.5891

YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/channel/UC_16hAS7meUtXEzSDp0w4EA

MOUNTAINS

LIAM PURCELL, originally from Deep Gap, NC, is a multi-instrumentalist in a variety of genres. You may know him best as the front man of the progressive bluegrass group Cane Mill Road. Purcell and his bandmates have toured and performed across the Eastern US and into the Midwest. Purcell is featured on two full-length Cane Mill Road albums, *Five Speed* and *Gap to Gap* which hit the Billboard Bluegrass Album Charts at #9 and #10, respectively.

Growing up in an area famous for its rich music scene, Purcell began playing guitar as a six-year-old. By age 12 he had a variety of acoustic instruments under his belt including guitar, fiddle, mandolin, banjo (bluegrass and clawhammer), Dobro, and upright bass. He soon applied his knowledge of music to electric instruments as well, picking up electric guitar, electric bass, and lap steel.

Not only is Purcell a performer and recording artist, but he is a dedicated teacher as well. He began teaching group lessons to younger kids, and now he teaches lessons for all ages in both group and private settings. He has taught at over a dozen multi-day camps and workshops and even taught traditional music classes at Appalachian State University. Purcell is a certified Wernick Method teacher. He owns a small recording studio where he records himself and others. He also produces albums and has co-produced with two-time GRAMMY Award winner Cathy Fink.

AVAILABILITY

Liam Purcell will consider performance invitations, both solo and with Cane Mill Road.

Raleigh Rockers

Break dance



Raleigh, Wake County, NC

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raleighrockers1234@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/RxRcrew

Instagram: @raleigh_rockers_crew

Dance battle

<https://youtu.be/54cFqkpUWRM>

Street performance

<https://youtu.be/XccalRBUD4M>

PIEDMONT

"That's the great thing about dance," says **RALEIGH ROCKERS** b-boy Brandon "No Cents" McCrimmons. "You have your body. You can do it anywhere you want. Anywhere is your canvas. . . .My paintbrush is my whole body. I'm going to paint the whole world!" Like drawing a sharp, precise line of graffiti across a concrete wall, breaking (b-boying) depends on expert levels of body control honed from hours of popping, locking, and head-spinning on cardboard. The art form inspires and is inspired by the other pillars of hip-hop (graffiti, rapping, DJ-ing). And b-boys like the Raleigh Rockers inherit a quintessentially Hip Hop tradition in which perfecting one's moves and passing them down to the youth are one and the same. Or, as No Cents puts it, "Each one, teach one."

Raleigh Rockers originated at North Carolina State University. Since then they have embedded themselves into the Triangle's underground dance communities. Besides competing across the country, the crew hosts events and workshops. Rockers have taught breaking to both kids and adults at venues like the Imurj and Living Arts Collective. In addition to performing at the Art of Cool Festival and the African American Cultural Festival, the crew have also established their own competitions like Turn It Loose and Natural Selection.

According to member Micky Nguyen, organizing multiple community-orientated experiences resonates with the Rockers mission "to see people dance that we've never seen before, but [who] live in the area." The Rockers commit to "each one teach one." As No Cents says, "You can't keep everything to yourself, or your community is not going to grow." When the community grows, the art form grows.

AVAILABILITY

Beyond hosting their own events and competitions, Raleigh Rockers are available for performances at parties, festivals, concerts, and other events. The crew welcomes the opportunity to teach breaking and can organize workshops for a variety of age groups and skill levels.

Rhiannon Ramsey

Rhiannon and the Relics | The Stoney Creek Boys
Old-time



Madison County, NC

(828) 767-7570

fiddlinrhiannon@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/FiddlerRhiannon

Instagram: @rhiannon.ramsey

Profile of Rhiannon Ramsey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiSeTlk2o1M>

"Lover's Waltz" with Bobby Hicks

<https://youtu.be/tty46NPC30Q>

MOUNTAINS

RHIANNON RAMSEY comes from Madison County, NC, where many members of her family and community have been known as great Appalachian singers and instrumentalists. Since childhood she has been the protégé of fiddler and North Carolina Heritage Award recipient Arvil Freeman, famous as both one of the region's most renowned musicians and skilled teachers. Like Arvil, Rhiannon fiddles in a smooth, expressive longbow style.

Rhiannon is a member of two well-known bands. She leads Rhiannon and the Relics, whose other members are all older, long-renowned Asheville-area musicians. She is also the youngest, and the first female, member of the legendary Stoney Creek Boys, a band that has been in existence for more than 50 years. Rhiannon succeeded her mentor, Arvil Freeman, when he retired as the Stoney Creek Boys' fiddler. She is also the house fiddler for two of Asheville's longest-running traditional music events, Shindig on the Green and the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival. In addition to continuing her performing career, Rhiannon looks forward to teaching fiddle to members of the next generation of mountain musicians.

AVAILABILITY

Rhiannon will consider performance invitations, solo, with Rhiannon and the Relics, or as a member of the Stoney Creek Boys.

Aaron Ratcliffe

Old-time | Square dance calling | Clogging



Greensboro, Guilford County, NC

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aaron.ratcliffe@gmail.com

PIEDMONT

An old-time musician, dancer, and caller, **AARON RATCLIFFE** works by day as an Assistant Professor of Marketing & Supply Chain Management at Appalachian State University. Between excelling as a scholar and succeeding as a performer, one could imagine Ratcliffe wishing to separate the two worlds. Not so. Ratcliffe wishes to merge those worlds. "The students I'm teaching about business and quantitative analysis," he says, "I [want to] also go to a dance with them and encourage them to see why that part of my life is meaningful."

Growing up watching family members flatfoot and buckdance, Ratcliffe began clogging in Waynesville County and Haywood County. In college, he joined the Cane Creek Cloggers, an Orange County-based group that hosts monthly dance lessons and has performed at festivals, fairs, and conventions throughout the Eastern United States. In addition to having managed the group, Ratcliffe has presented old-time dance and music workshops for clients like the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis and Elkins College.

For the accomplished educator and folk practitioner, old-time music and dance are inseparable. "[Students] haven't really been to a square dance, and they're playing old-time music," says Ratcliffe. "[D]o they understand the connection between the music and the dance when there aren't that many opportunities to experience local square dancing?" Through performing, teaching, and advocating, Ratcliffe aspires to show that connection—to generations young and old.

AVAILABILITY

Aaron Ratcliffe is available for performance and teaching opportunities.

Raund Haus

Hip-hop | Electronic music | Beatmaking



Durham, Durham County, NC

info@raundhaus.com

www.raundhaus.bandcamp.com

www.facebook.com/raundhaus

Twitter: @raundhaus

Instagram: @raund_haus

PIEDMONT

What does the future sound like? For the electronic beatmaking collective Raund Haus, forging the sounds of the future is inherent to making their music. But how does one find a place for those sounds to be heard? "I want to make beats," says Nick Walhausser (a.k.a. Gappa Mighty), "[but] we need some place to play these beat[s] we make in our bedrooms all the time." The Raund Haus solution? Make booking shows and building community one and the same.

Bridging the gap between bedrooms and venues, Raund Haus organizes showcases featuring local Triangle (and occasionally out-of-state) electronic artists. Beginning in 2016, their shows evolved from the idea of what DJ/organizer David Huber (a.k.a. Hubble) calls a "beat cypher." During performances, projectors flash VHS-based visuals onto walls, and multi-artist collaborative jams transition into dedicated solo sets. Having organized events at The Shed, The Pinhook, Kings, and Bull City Records, the collective reached a highpoint in 2018 when they hosted a feature stage at Moogfest, one of the premier electronic music and technology festivals in the US. In 2017, after obtaining a digital distribution deal with Redeye Worldwide, the group formed Raund Haus Records and later released *hi key lo key* by founding member Trandle.

An excellent introduction to North Carolina's stellar electronic music scene, the artists of Raund Haus create not just mind-bending beats, but also sonically inclusive spaces that invite eclectic styles to commune on common grounds and dance floors.

AVAILABILITY

As an artist collective, Raund Haus is available for solo or group musical performances. They can organize or host their own events in collaboration with a variety of venue types, from record stores to bakeries to clubs.

Justin Richardson

Haliwa-Saponi gourd carving



Hollister, Halifax County, NC
justin02051994@gmail.com

COASTAL PLAIN

JUSTIN RICHARDSON is a Haliwa-Saponi gourd carving artist. He began his artistic training in the Haliwa-Saponi Traditional Arts Programs for Students (TAPS) class, where he was introduced to many tribal arts by elder artists like Arnold Richardson and Senora Lynch, both N.C. Heritage Award recipients. In TAPS, "we can get a one-on-one sit-down with the artists of the tribe who know this, and they can teach us," Richardson says. "It's a way to pass traditions from one generation to the next generation." Although Richardson tried his hand at every craft TAPS offered, from basketweaving to stone carving, Arnold Richardson's gourd carving workshop proved to be the spark that set Justin Richardson on his true path. Burning contrasting patterns into the hardened surface, gourd carving gave him expressive freedom and the satisfaction of a finished piece with both practical and decorative purpose. Richardson has turned his gourd work into vases, spoons, ceremonial pieces, regalia medallions, and jewelry, and made a special centerpiece for a friend's wedding table. His award-winning gourds have been featured at tribal community events and competitions.

In 2018, Richardson returned to his TAPS class to teach gourd carving himself. The experience of mentoring young students he has watched grow up with left an impression of him. "Same way Mr. Arnold taught me how to carve gourds and play the flute, I can do that now and I have the privilege to show them how to do it... It's just nice that I get to pass down what I learned to the next person, even though I'm not an elder. I'm just somebody more or less their age. I'm just a millennial. But I'm able to show them how to do it. I think it's a good thing that I'm younger because they can relax around me."

AVAILABILITY

Justin Richardson will consider invitations to demonstrate and teach, and can be contacted for commissions.

William Ritter

Old-time | Storytelling | Balladry | Folklore



Bakersville, Mitchell County, NC

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William Ritter and Charlie Glenn

<https://youtu.be/gozyxMomtnw>

"Lone Journey"

<https://youtu.be/pDxvNgiRkSs>

MOUNTAINS

WILLIAM RITTER is a singer, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, and folklorist. Ritter was born and raised in Mitchell County, NC. He was surrounded by mountain culture growing up, but didn't take a vested interest until he started school at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. "I knew one thing when I applied to school. I wanted to stay in the mountains. Even there, I became very homesick and found that this old music could take me back to that sense of place I was missing." Ritter decided that he wanted to build a fiddle, which led him to meeting and befriending instrument builder Ray Dellinger. "Ray gave me a priceless education on mountain music, local history, Appalachian studies, mountain humor, and the finer points of being a Free-Will Baptist. He really encouraged me early on, and kindled my interest in mountain culture."

After graduating with a degree in theater, Ritter attended graduate school at Appalachian State University, where he received an MA in Appalachian Studies. "Eventually it seemed pretty obvious, as interested as I was and as much research as I was doing on my own, that I should go back to school—which I had vowed I'd never do." While at Appalachian State, Ritter researched mountain humor, "became obsessed with greasy beans and seed-saving," and delved further into the music history of the Toe River Valley.

Ritter has developed friendships and mentorships with a number of folklorists, musicians, storytellers, and tradition-bearers in the Western North Carolina region, including North Carolina Heritage Award recipient Bobby McMillon, with whom Ritter received a 2019 Folklife Apprenticeship from the Folklife Program at the North Carolina Arts Council.

AVAILABILITY

William Ritter is available for performances both solo and with his wife Sarah Ogletree. They are available for wedding ceremonies, concerts, festivals, dances, and other gatherings. Ritter repairs instruments and gives lessons on fiddle, banjo, and guitar. He also gives presentations on a wide range of topics like seed-saving, mountain music, and mountain humor.

Atiba Rorie

Africa Unplugged
Blues | Jazz | Funk | West African traditional music



Greensboro, Guilford County, NC

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www.reverbnation.com/africaunpluggedmusic

"Babba Chuck Unplugged - Africa Unplugged"

<https://youtu.be/RCAFT2oek84>

"Africa Unplugged"

<https://youtu.be/vn8MGICdIPw>

PIEDMONT

The journey of the music of the African Diaspora is one of tradition and innovation across borders. The sonic influences of the motherland adapt perpetually to the new places Black people call home. As the percussionist, guitarist, vocalist, and bandleader of Africa Unplugged, **ATIBA RORIE** aspires to create songs that showcase connections between African American and West African music in real time. In the band's melancholic song "Let U Go," a funk-blues refrain slinks forward while a polyrhythmic rush of African drums—djembes and dunun—thrums underneath, channeling B.B. King backed by Babatunde Olatunji and the Drums of Passion.

Rorie's connection with Olatunji is not just a stylistic one. The eminent Nigerian master drummer named and godfathered Rorie, whose father managed Olatunji's touring ensemble. Rorie's first experience of traditional African percussion came while following the ensemble along on tour. Following soon became performing. Though in his early teens, Rorie displayed talent as a drummer and joined Olatunji's group. Now, an adult with his own musical career, Rorie both succeeds and diverges from his godfather's legacy. With Africa Unplugged, whose debut EP arrived in 2018, Rorie has performed at festivals, jazz clubs, and universities across North Carolina, putting on shows that employ the West African and Afro-Cuban traditions Rorie studied to celebrate, educate, and innovate.

"Music's been around here as long as people," says Rorie. "So the only way to have something new now is to take [...] different idioms and put them together." That exemplifies Rorie's music—a new way of connecting music as old as the African Diaspora, as old as people.

AVAILABILITY

Rorie is available for opportunities to teach about the history and practice of West African and Afro-Cuban music. His five-piece band, Africa Unplugged, are also available for live performances at festivals, clubs, and other venues.

Kevin “Rowdy” Rowsey

(J) Rowdy & the Nightshift
Hip-hop



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PIEDMONT

"I rock more than just a hip hop crowd," says Triangle Hip Hop artist **KEVIN "ROWDY" ROWSEY**. "I can do an improv crowd. I can do stand-up. I can go to a workshop with some kids and still be able to successfully reach and connect with that audience." Rowsey excels at the foundational skill of emceeing to move a crowd. Roaring through one of his tongue-twisting tracks, busting a freestyle mid-song, or leading an impromptu Electric Slide, Rowdy brings a stage presence and energy that is undeniable, building upon a Golden Era tradition of rappers whose greatest skill was not just lyrical prowess but the power to transfix a crowd.

Born in Michigan, Rowdy moved to North Carolina as a youngster after his mother obtained a position teaching at UNC-Chapel Hill's nursing program. During middle school, a classmate handed Rowdy a mixtape. Containing tracks from not only Eminem, Missy Elliot, and OutKast but also Beethoven and Bach, the tape sparked a restless creative drive in Rowdy, who began writing poems in notebooks. Having fed this creative drive since he began making music in high school, Rowdy has fostered a dynamic career as both a hip hop artist and ambassador. He is a member of the No9to5 Music collective and front man of the rap-jazz outfit (J) Rowdy & The Night Shift, having shared stages alongside rap luminaries like Rakim, Busta Rhymes, and Murs.

Featured on NPR, PBS Kids, and Indy Week, Rowdy has also presented a TEDx Talk on the significance of hip hop culture, served as US Hip Hop Ambassador through the US Department of State, and facilitated Hip Hop WokeShops at Durham's Blackspace since 2016.

While the cultivation of his craft as an independent artist is exceptional, Rowsey's commitment to the cultivation of the Triangle hip hop scene is also remarkable. "The importance of local scenes is really to establish the voice," he says, "the individualized voice of the area." Having founded two community cyphers—the UNC Cypher at UNC-Chapel Hill and the Med City Cypher in downtown Durham—Rowdy honors the grassroots spirit of hip-hop culture of building community through creativity, and with a Masters in Teaching from UNC-Greensboro, he intends to spread that spirit through performance and educational workshops.

AVAILABILITY

Rowdy is available to be booked for performances, solo or with his group (J) Rowdy & The Nightshift. He can also organize presentations or workshops centered around the craft and culture of hip hop.

Ali Rudel

Foodways | Piemaking



Durham, Durham County, NC

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ali@eastdurhampie.com

www.eastdurhambakeshop.com

PIEDMONT

ALI RUDEL starting baking pies in her home under the name East Durham Pie Company in 2015. Five years earlier, she had trained under sisters Emily and Melissa Elsen, the team behind New York's Four & Twenty Blackbirds—a bakery often credited with popularizing traditional pies amid the boutique cupcake and cronut crazes. At the time, Rudel was working as a barista and interning with StoryCorps, but as the business grew, she transitioned from watching the sisters bake, to apprenticing, to baking alongside them fulltime.

When she and her husband, Ben Filippo, relocated to Durham, NC, to start their family, Rudel further developed her baking voice in the family kitchen—local ingredients and no shortcuts are her hallmarks. "I do everything the long way," she explains. "Having really intimate control over every single component is important to me." As her pies gained a following, Rudel sold at pop-ups at area businesses and ultimately decided to open a storefront following a successful Kickstarter campaign.

In March 2018, with help from Filippo, she opened East Durham Bake Shop on Driver Street, the main strip of this former commercial neighborhood. There, you can find old favorites, like her Honey Lemon Chess pie (made with local wildflower honey), in addition to other sweet and savory treats and coffee. She and Filippo are also working to make the bakery an affordable, inclusive gathering place for the local community. Next time you visit, you might be surprised by an offer of a cup of coffee or a slice on the house—just be sure to pay it forward to the next unsuspecting customer.

AVAILABILITY

For hours, menus, weekend class schedules, and event orders, visit www.eastdurhambakeshop.com.

Mytreji Shastry Aravind

S.R. Mytreji
Indian Carnatic vocals



Morrisville, Wake County, NC

musicmytreji@gmail.com

<https://youtu.be/YKH4fdCOdRc>

"Appa rama bhakthi- Pantuvarali- Rupakam- Sri Thyagaraja"

<https://youtu.be/Kj9LTs-V51E>

PIEDMONT

Shrimati **MYTREJI SHASTRY ARAVIND** (known as **S.R. MYTREJI**) entered into Carnatic music at a young age, coming from a family of musical connoisseurs. Her father, Sri S.R. Ramkrushna Sastry, was a disciple of the late "Sangeetha Kalanidhi" Sri D.K. Jayaraman. Mytreji herself is a disciple of "Padma Bhushan" Sri P.S. Narayanaswami and "Kalaimamani" Dr Rukmini Ramani. With over two decades of training, Mytreji strives to both innovate within and preserve the living tradition of Carnatic vocal music.

The term "Carnatic" refers to the classical music and dance of the Dravidian cultures in South India. Vocals play the most prominent role in a Carnatic ensemble, with melodic instruments following and imitating the sound of the singer. Vocalists either improvise based on melodic modes (*raga*) and rhythmic cycles (*tala*), or draw from variations on compositions and lyrical texts dating to the 18th century composers Thyagraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Shyama Shastri.

Mytreji has performed at international venues from India to Scandinavia, and has been recognized with awards in music from organizations like the Music Academy in Chennai, the Indian Institute of Technology, and the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research. Now based in Morrisville, NC, home to a thriving Indian community, Mytreji also teaches a few students of her own.

AVAILABILITY

S.R. Mytreji can be contacted for concert performances in Carnatic vocals. She can offer Carnatic music lessons for all levels, both in-person and online.

Madison Shepherd

Old-time



Ashe County, NC

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MOUNTAINS

Across the mountains of North Carolina, the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program is raising up the next generation to play the traditional old-time and bluegrass music of the region. **MADISON SHEPHERD** is one of the young artists who learned the tradition not through family but through the knee-to-knee teaching in Ashe County's JAM program. First inspired to play traditional music when she was six years old and attended a Rhonda Vincent concert, for which the Ashe County JAM students opened, Shepherd joined the JAM program herself in the fourth grade, and took up the old-time banjo.

Now an award-winning banjo player, Shepherd has won first prize in the youth banjo competitions of the Ashe County, Mount Airy, Appalachian State, Alleghany, and Surry County Fiddlers Conventions in NC, the Galax, Tazewell, Elk Creek, and Fries conventions in Va., Laurel Bloomery in Tenn., at the Tommy Jarrell Festival in Mount Airy, and in the Bristol Rhythm and Roots Youth Competition. She has also placed in the adult banjo competition at the Galax Fiddlers Convention.

Shepherd has played with her own bands, and appears on the album *Close Kin: Our Roots Run Deep*, which brings together old-time and bluegrass musicians of all generations. She has also been a clogger since childhood. Madison Shepherd has created her own place in her community's music and dance traditions, and now passes them on as an instructor in the same JAM program that set her on her path.

AVAILABILITY

Madison Shepherd will consider invitations for performances, recordings, and musical collaborations.

Jessica Spaulding Dingle

Beadwork | Regalia | Painting | Jewelmaking



Lake Waccamaw, Columbus County, NC

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www.aim-nc.com/jessica-dingle

COASTAL PLAIN

For Waccamaw Siouan bead artist **JESSICA SPAULDING DINGLE**, her origin as an artist can be traced to the pow-wows she would attend as a girl. "There's two things whenever I went to the pow-wow that I always loved," she remembers, "and it was the fancy dancers and the beadwork . . . It was just like a you-know-you-know kind of moment." Since that moment, Dingle had dedicated her life to mastering the art of beadwork. Whether it's a necklace, bracelet, or crown for Miss Indian North Carolina, Dingle's pieces are characterized by her stylish, vibrant use of color and clean stitching that hides "where [she] started and where [she] stopped," putting her own spin on traditional beadwork technique.

Though a bearer of the beadwork tradition, Spaulding Dingle entered the tradition via an unconventional path—teaching herself. "[People] want that story about, 'Oh, you learned from your grandmother, and [you were] sitting by the fire and telling stories,'" she says, "and for some people, that is their story, but for me, that's not how it happened." Though she grew up in an artistic family—her mother paints ceramics, her father makes stainless steel jewelry, and her grandmother sewed quilts—Spaulding Dingle did not personally know anyone in the community who could teach her beadwork. Rather, using a 12" loom and instruction book her father bought her, she taught herself, beginning with set designs and then quickly experimenting with her own forms. Carrying beads with her everywhere she went, Spaulding Dingle was soon recognized for her talents and even invited to do beadwork for fancy dancers at the pow-wows.

Today, through her business, WaccaBeads & Design, Spaulding Dingle is a working artist, selling handmade pieces that combine her skills in beadwork, jewelry-making, and painting. Having showcased her work at the North Carolina Indian Unity Conference and American Indian Heritage Celebration, she retains that the greatest reward is not necessarily someone buying one of her pieces, but the way a piece is cherished by another. "The best part of the whole process," she says, "is [the piece] going to someone that loves it. . . [whose] appreciation is equal to the work I put it into it."

AVAILABILITY

Dingle sells readymade pieces and accepts commissions through her WaccaBeads & Design storefront on Facebook, and is willing to teach the art of beadwork. She also works in contemporary jewelry and mixed media painting.

Kilby Albert Spencer

Crooked Road Ramblers | Spencer Branch
Old-time



Crumpler, Ashe County, NC

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kilbyas@hotmail.com

www.crookedroadramblers.com

MOUNTAINS

KILBY SPENCER is a prominent old-time musician originally from Whitetop, Virginia, and now living in Crumpler, NC. He grew up learning from and playing with his parents, banjo player Emily Spencer and the late fiddler Thornton Spencer. His sister Martha is also a well-known Blue Ridge musician. In addition to his parents, Spencer cites friend Johnny Miller and friend and cousin Dean Sturgill as mentors. He is also inspired by the playing of Albert Hash, G.B. Grayson, Corbit Stamper, Otis Burris and Muncey Gaultney.

Spencer plays with the Crooked Road Ramblers, a band that he founded "in hopes of carrying on the driving Southwest Virginia 'big' band sound that makes people want to dance." Spencer's bandmates include banjo player Kelley Breiding, guitarist John Perry, guitarist Donald Hill, bass player Karen Carr, and mandolinist Wayne Dye. A board member of the Field Recorders' Collective, Spencer is known as a deeply knowledgeable resource for information about and recordings of historic musicians from the Virginia-North Carolina Blue Ridge region.

AVAILABILITY

Kilby Spencer is available for performances and to play for dances with the Crooked Road Ramblers.

Akhila Takkallapalli

Classical Indian *Kuchipudi* dance



Photo: Will Warasila

Cary, Wake County, NC

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akhiladance@gmail.com

www.akhiladance.wixsite.com/website

"Govardhana"

<https://youtu.be/SinTBQn069U>

"Nava Rasa Thillana"

https://youtu.be/k_U_zoJJ3uc

PIEDMONT

To **AKHILA TAKKALLAPALLI**, dancing is a lifelong practice that allows her to deeply understand herself and the nature of the world. She began to learn the classical Indian dance style Kuchipudi during a summer trip to India and now practices the dance in the Triangle area. Takkallapalli looks forward to performance, teaching, and collaborative opportunities in which she may share that Kuchipudi dance "has the inherent power to transform not just the doer, but those who get to experience the nectar of it."

Familiarized with Indian classical dance as a young child living in India, Takkallapalli's first personal involvement and dance class was due to her mother and the belief she held in the value of classical Indian arts. At 14, she began to practice Kuchipudi in the US, travelling every summer to Atlanta, Ga. in order to learn from guru Sasikala Penumarthi, whose performance the preceding year had left Takkallapalli spellbound. Throughout her years in college Takkallapalli continued to study with Guru Sasikala in the Guru-Sishya (Teacher-student) tradition, residing with her Guru for longer periods of time than previous years had allowed.

Takkallapalli has performed lead roles in her Guru's dance dramas as well as shared solo performances with communities in California, Vermont, New York, Mississippi, Georgia, London, and North Carolina, including a 2017 performance at UNC Chapel Hill. In India she has performed in Orissa, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, including Kuchipudi village, where the Kuchipudi dance style originated. Takkallapalli taught alongside her Guru at the Academy of Kuchipudi Dance, Atlanta for the last four years before relocating to NC for her work as a medical provider. Takkallapalli has found the state to be a promising space to grow her art and share her passion with the community through teaching as well as performance.

AVAILABILITY

Akhila Takkallapalli is available for performances, teaching/workshops, and creative collaborations with artists of other genres.

Chris Testerman

Old-time | Luthiery



Lansing, Ashe County, NC

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www.facebook.com/The-Cabin-Creek-Boys-549757691876035

"Say Old Man Can You Play The Fiddle"

<https://youtu.be/PMHdri-pAnU>

Growing up in the Whitetop community of Virginia, on the North Carolina state line, **CHRIS TESTERMAN** was exposed from an early age to one of the richest traditions in old-time music. He began his life as a musician in the Albert Hash Memorial Stringband at Mount Rogers School. It was there that he first learned about the Hash family's legacy of fiddle making, started by Albert Hash and then carried on by his daughter Audrey Hash Ham.

When he was 15 years old, Testerman contacted Audrey Hash Ham and asked for her help learning the art of fiddle-making. When she saw the depth of the young man's interest, she agreed to teach him, bringing him into the lineage of Whitetop violin makers. He also received instruction from Archie Powers, a former student of Albert Hash, as well as dulcimer maker Walter Messick and banjo builder Johnny Gentry.

Testerman plays with several regional old-time bands, including the Cabin Creek Boys. He also teaches both music and luthiery, giving back to the musical community that fostered his talents. He is an instructor in the Alleghany County Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program. Testerman also shares patterns with those learning violin building, and welcomes students to his shop to learn the art.

AVAILABILITY

Chris Testerman is available for performances solo or with the Cabin Creek Boys and lessons in old-time music and luthiery. Shop visits and orders may be arranged by contacting him through phone or email.

Meral Tunc-Ozdemir

Turkish water marbling (Ebru)



Photo: Tasha Thomas

Chapel Hill, Orange County, NC

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PIEDMONT

MERAL TUNC-OZDEMIR works in the centuries-old traditional Turkish water marbling art of ebru, painting paper on water. She sprinkles dyes on a water bath with brushes of horsehair bound to rose branches, and uses needles to draw the dye into patterns on the surface of the water. By gently placing paper on the surface to absorb the colors, the pattern is lifted from the water and transferred to the paper. Each print is unique and can never be repeated. Tunc-Ozdemir also practices "kaat' I" or cut-out relief, a stenciling and pasting process that uses ebru papers. She is also adept at calligraphy arts.

Although Tunc-Ozdemir was born in Turkey, she discovered ebru upon moving to the US for her graduate studies. She recalls, "I was mesmerized with water marbling when I saw a live ebru demonstration for the first time in Nevada. It was a perfect combination of science, innovation, and creativity. It was the art calling my name." Tunc-Ozdemir is a plant molecular biologist, and she finds artistic inspiration in ebru's echoes of the natural and molecular world. Ebru requires years of training to master, and Tunc-Ozdemir has sought out practitioners both in person and online as she deepens her knowledge of its techniques and philosophies. Her ebru education is now a lifetime project, leading her to receiving a 2012 Nevada Folklife apprenticeship grant in the art. Today, she resides in Chapel Hill where she works as a research scientist in RTP. She has participated in numerous festivals and exhibitions, including the 2016 National Folk Festival in Greensboro, NC.

AVAILABILITY

Meral Tunc-Ozdemir will consider invitations to display, demonstrate, and teach.

Grace Tuschak

Pottery



Raleigh, Wake County, NC

Instagram: @twoshackpottery

www.etsy.com/shop/twoshackpottery

PIEDMONT

When asked to describe her pottery aesthetic, **GRACE TUSCHAK** uses phrases like "very clean" and "everyday." From mugs to small pots, tumblers to vases, Tuschak's ceramics are fine and functional, with earthy colors and subtle luster, but they also display Tuschak's quirky sense of humor. Occasionally, her mugs feature unusual handles with shapes that droop, dollop, and stick outward. Or, inspired by the Victorian mustache mug design, they feature a convenient ledge to ensure that hirsute coffee-lovers' furry upper lips stay dry with every sip. These small flourishes of form bring a lighthearted humor and levity that complements the functional nature of Tuschak's pottery. These are ceramics not only to live with, but to love.

Tuschak's love for pottery began in middle school when she assisted and learned from a ceramicist who was a friend of her family. Moving from her native New Jersey to South Carolina for college, she worked on her skills here and there with intermittent art courses. After moving to NC, Tuschak got the opportunity to learn under Lou Raye Nichol, an Apex-based potter whose specialization in carbon-trapping firing sparked Tuschak's interest.

Today, when she is not putting her graduate degree in city planning to good use, Tuschak operates her own small home studio in her backyard, and sells her work through her digital storefront Two Shack Pottery.

AVAILABILITY

Grace Tuschak has pieces available for sale through her Etsy site. In addition, she also produces specialized pieces for commission.

Damir “DW” Watson

Percussion



Photo: Phyllis Dooney

Durham, Durham County, NC

damir827@gmail.com

"DW on drums at True Vine Ministries"

<https://youtu.be/BAT9KvrdMuu>

PIEDMONT

Percussionist **DAMIR “DW” WATSON** moved to Elizabethtown in Bladen County, NC from Delaware when he was a child. His love for music and the drums came at an early age. “I got started in the kitchen when I was a little boy, [playing] pots and pans,” he said. “I used to get into trouble because I would pick like the good pots and the real good spoons, because they sounded best.”

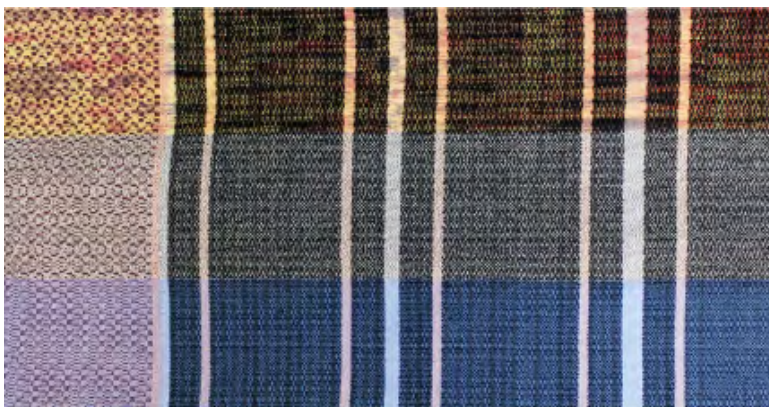
Watson also plays piano, although he mostly travels and performs playing drums. He’s played throughout the United States and internationally, including the United Kingdom, Jamaica, Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia. He was inspired by artists like gospel singer John P. Kee, and by New Jersey-based musician Jason Coleman. “[Coleman] was more like a mentor than anything else, but he was just phenomenal. So I would study everything he did, and try to do it just like he did.” Although Watson grew up listening to traditional gospel, most of his engagements are in more contemporary styles of music.

AVAILABILITY

Damir Watson will consider invitations for performances and artistic collaborations.

Hannah Watson

Weaving



Asheville, Buncombe County, NC

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www.hannahwatsontextiles.com

MOUNTAINS

As meticulous and laborious an art form as weaving is, in which one tension error can set a plan awry, Asheville weaver and textile artist **HANNAH WATSON** is still enamored by the magical aspects of the craft. "I'm heavily into experimentation and mysteries of not knowing how the cloth is going to turn out. How contrasting colors come together to create some new visual phenomenon," she explains. She takes inspiration from contrasting textures and color schemes drawn from nature. One cloth can evoke spring's neon green leaves, deep evergreen trees, and vibrant flowers, and then make them abstract across perpendicular lines of yarn, exemplifying how a traditional art form thousands of years old offers novel ways of witnessing (and creating from) the world.

Raised in South Carolina, Watson has gravitated toward textiles since childhood. One grandmother decorated her house with magnificent blue textiles, and another grandmother quilted. Both wove at different points of their life, but Watson's first exploration with weaving was learning how to work a backstrap loom from a Quechua woman in Peru, where she worked for eight months as a resident design intern for the Awamaki Women's Artisanal Cooperative. Though Watson already had years of experience as a seamstress, her time in Peru convinced her to pursue weaving after returning to the US.

After immersing herself in the textile scene of Marshall, NC, Watson discovered the "Professional Crafts: Fiber" program at Haywood Community College. Graduating in 2019, Watson developed an understanding of weaving theory and floor loom operation. Since joining the program, she has accumulated a number of accolades, including a Handweavers Guild of America Design Award. Her work has been exhibited at the American Craft Show, the Greenville Fine Arts Center, and Southern Highland Craft Guild Folk Art Center.

Watson sees that the power of traditional art forms is in the connections they uniquely engender—between people and place, families and generations. For her, weaving has been a way to "connect with [her grandmothers], honor them, and honor women especially as a whole." Weaving has allowed her to forge a new connection with the landscape and communities of Western North Carolina. "How weaving kind of feels like home," she says, "the mountains kind of feel like home."

AVAILABILITY

Watson is interested in artist-in-residency opportunities and collaborations with artists working in different media.

Radha Varadan

Classical Indian Kathak dance



Photo: Aaron Zhao

Cary, Wake County, NC

radha.varadan@gmail.com

"Who I Am - Radha Varadan"

<https://vimeo.com/351664067>

Rasa (excerpts) performed by Radha Varadan at NY Kathak Festival

<https://youtu.be/LkRkrBZTOig>

PIEDMONT

"My own introspection into my dance comes from both people here and people in India that I am watching and observing," says **RADHA VARADAN**. Born in California and a North Carolinian since childhood, she was raised among the large Indian traditional arts community in Cary, NC. Herself a Kathak dancer, Varadan was first attracted to the style when she saw it on television in India as a child. She began her training nearly 10 years ago, and studies under her guru, the internationally acclaimed performer and choreographer Sri Prashant Shah, whom she credits with her growth and achievements as a dancer.

Kathak, which means "The Storyteller," is a narrative dance, in which the movements portray stories. With roots in both devotional worship and the courts, Kathak dancers can draw from the sacred and the secular. Dancers tell devotional stories, traditional evocations of seasons like the nostalgia for warmth brought on by monsoon season, and modern themes of emotional life. Kathak is distinct from other Indian classical dance forms in its subtlety and naturalism of movement and expression. Tiny flicks of the wrist contain a magnitude of emotion, but the viewer must watch attentively. Varadan is trained in the Lucknow tradition of Kathak, which allows the dancer great freedom to explore movement and express contemporary feeling.

Varadan has performed internationally in India and Switzerland, and recently danced at the New York Kathak Festival and the San Diego Indian Fine Arts Academy Youth Festival. She was awarded the Hum Sub Youth Achievement Award in Education and Cultural Arts. On what defines North Carolina's Indian classical dance community Varadan says, "It's attracting not only people of Indian origin but people of all diverse backgrounds. They're all united by this one appreciation for this culture and for this art form. That's not something I've experienced before, but it's wonderful seeing how the dance here has evolved into this unifying thing for a diverse group of people."

AVAILABILITY

Radha Varadan will consider invitations for performances and workshops.

Caique Vidal

Batuque
Afro-Brazilian music and percussion



Durham, Durham County, NC

(919) 621-3712

caiquevidal@gmail.com

www.caiquevidal.com

"Aidê - Caique Vidal and Batuque"

<https://youtu.be/aD-rYNyxpRU>

"Alabe - Atabaque Player"

<https://youtu.be/ovadr4x97J8>

The tradition in which Afro-Brazilian musician **CAIQUE VIDAL** and his band Batuque ("to drum") create is a futuristic one. Describing their aesthetic, Vidal emphasizes how "[the band] connects the ancestor's sounds with new technologies." Through experiments with synthesizers and distortion, Batuque expands the sonic and rhythmic lineage of the African Diaspora, honoring and synthesizing the Diaspora's many global musical strains to generate a sound that uses the momentum of the past to push toward the future.

Born in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, Vidal performed and showcased Afro-Brazilian music both locally and internationally long before he made his home in NC. In addition to community organizing through Salvador's Olodum Mirin project, Vidal worked with Balé Folclórico da Bahia and Percussivo Mundo Novo, performing from Germany to Colombia, the United States to Belgium. After moving to NC in 2012, Vidal formed Batuque. Together, Caique Vidal and Batuque have performed at the Art of Cool, Fiesta del Pueblo, and the Afro-Bahia Festival. Their debut album, *TYSM (Thank You So Much)*, arrived in 2018.

Batuque "play[s] Brazilian music," says Vidal. "But don't get me wrong. This isn't samba for a whole hour show." Batuque celebrates the multi-culturalism of Brazilian music. "It is samba. It is Bossa Nova. It is Latin music—salsa, bachata. It is pop. It is rock. It's all crumbled and mixed together in such a harmonized way."

AVAILABILITY

In addition to performing at cultural festivals, in particular those connected to the African Diaspora, Caique Vidal and his nine-person band, Batuque, are available to perform at multi-genre music festivals and venues in NC and beyond. An advocate for Afro-Brazilian musical culture, Vidal is also available to teach workshops on his country's music to professional musicians, public school students, and universities.

ZenSoFly

Hip-hop | R&B



Raleigh, Wake County, NC

S.Goldstein@ZenSoFly.com

<https://soundcloud.com/zensofly>

<https://www.facebook.com/HiZensofly/>

"Sky Is The Limit"

<https://youtu.be/dyK2tC-ukSU>

"Getting Started"

<https://youtu.be/BQqGmhw7g3M>

PIEDMONT

DJs and R&B singers share a common mission to vitalize and guide the spirit of an audience. A DJ does it from behind a laptop, fading song into song, a balancing act of curating, improvising, and keeping the energy so that the beat never dies. A singer does it at the center of a stage, drawing in the crowd with each bend and pull of the melody. A self-taught DJ and versatile rapper-singer, **ZENSOFLY** composes dance floor anthems for loners, merging traditions of house, hip-hop, and R&B to explore new ways dance music can connect strangers.

Though based in Raleigh, ZenSoFly began her musical journey in Atlanta, whose community of local and national artists has fundamentally shaped hip-hop and R&B in both the American South and the greater United States. While visiting a record store, she met the DJ-singer duo Watch The Duck, who quickly invited her to perform as their opening act. Between the group's mentorship and plenty of YouTube tutorials, Zen soon developed her skills as a DJ, a craft that eventually "led [her] to become an artist." Moving fully into the realm of songwriting, Zen has released two EPs, *Little Miss Perfect* and *Sunflowers*. Besides local outlets like Indy Week and WUNC, this North Carolina artist's music has been featured by NPR and Afropunk.

AVAILABILITY

ZenSoFly is available for both solo performances and, though less often, DJ sets.

Zoe and Cloyd

Natalya Zoe Weinstein and John Cloyd Miller
Old-time | Bluegrass | Klezmer | Folk



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[facebook.com/zoeandcloyd](https://www.facebook.com/zoeandcloyd)

"Lazy Man Blues"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqAlaPN0nO4>

"Running On Empty"

<https://youtu.be/pZHcVuOGf2M>

"Berditchever Sher"

<https://youtu.be/e4mRtw8AMdg>

MOUNTAINS

ZOE AND CLOYD are the middle names of husband-and-wife acoustic duo Natalya Weinstein and John Miller. Both musicians represent long family traditions, as well as the variety of musical styles, old and new, to be found in artistically rich Asheville, North Carolina.

John descends from a family of Appalachian musicians, including renowned early bluegrass fiddler Jim Shumate, his grandfather. A singer and multi-instrumentalist, John is a skilled banjo, guitar, and mandolin player. Like his grandfather, he is also a songwriter. He has won the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest, a high honor for writers of Americana and traditionally based new music. The North Carolina Arts Council has also awarded him an artist fellowship in songwriting.

Natalya Weinstein is the daughter of a jazz pianist, and the granddaughter of a klezmer musician. She herself plays in both styles, as well as bluegrass, old-time, and classical. In addition to her studies as a musician, Natalya has a Master's degree in Appalachian studies, for which she wrote her thesis on the evolution of fiddling in bluegrass music.

Performing together as Zoe and Cloyd, Weinstein and Miller are known for harmonies and songwriting evocative of classic country music, and multi-instrumental playing that draws from the deep heritage of the Appalachian mountains and other acoustic traditions. The duo have recorded three albums together, and tour throughout the US. Zoe and Cloyd are, according to Bluegrass Unlimited, "a musical collaboration that demands to be heard."

AVAILABILITY

Zoe and Cloyd are available for performance and workshop invitations.

ZOOCRÜ

Jazz | Hip-hop | R&B



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www.zoocruofficial.com

www.facebook.com/Zoocru
zoocru.bandcamp.com/releases

ZOOCRÜ Sessions "9mm"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMz-xDOxY0s>

ZOOCRÜ "Naked"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR0OGx-g4lw>

PIEDMONT

Some listeners may feel that jazz—especially the fusion-informed, genre-bending variant in which the collective **ZOOCRÜ** is masterfully proficient—is too “brainy.” Throughout the journey of **ZOOCRÜ**’S debut album, *Lucid* (2016), each song acts a station of virtuosic improvisation: nimble basslines, droning synthesizers, and ethereal and effortless saxophone solos. **ZOOCRÜ**’S sound can be cerebral. Yet bottling the sonic bubbling of Miles Davis’ *Bitches Brew* into pop song structures, and building upon an alternative R&B and hip-hop foundation that NC artists like the Beast and the Foreign Exchange lay before them, **ZOOCRÜ** reminds any jazz skeptic that the brain and body are not a dichotomy. **ZOOCRÜ**’S songs thump. They bounce. They call you to dance—with your feet and your mind.

Like those of many of NC’s jazz, hip hop, and R&B artists, **ZOOCRÜ**’S story begins on a campus. North Carolina Central University hosts some of the nation’s leading programs in music and in jazz studies, and there **ZOOCRÜ**’S founding members—Alan Thompson, Jonathan Curry, and Christian Sharp—first began to collaborate in 2012. After they spent years cutting their teeth in the local scene in Durham, and added guitarist Russell Favret to the ensemble in 2014, a Kickstarter campaign raised over \$10,000 to fund **ZOOCRÜ**’S debut album. In the time since its release, the band has appeared at multiple Art of Cool festivals and toured the nation.

ZOOCRÜ prize liberation as an aesthetic. (The “zoo” refers the ways in which artists are forced to confine their craft, be it through the limitations of a genre, the music industry, or society.) Likewise, they prize it as a politic. Descending from a lineage that includes Tryon-born Nina Simone, whose progressive politics manifested in a sound that cross-pollinated classical, jazz, and gospel, **ZOOCRÜ** calls their music “equal parts anthem and affirmation; sounds that heal the broken, tunes to honor the fallen and creating sonic space for all in the Crü World Order.”

AVAILABILITY

ZOOCRÜ is available for concerts, festivals, and other live performances.

The North Carolina Arts Council is a division
of the North Carolina Department of
Natural and Cultural Resources

