



**MUSIC MAKER  
SUSTENANCE REPORT 2021**



# WITH GRATITUDE

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Dear Friends,

The past year presented enormous challenges to Music Maker and the artists we serve. The Covid pandemic once again stymied live performance. In response, Music Maker continued our pivot to digital engagement and increased financial aid to Partner Artists.

What has inspired us during this time is the resilience of our artists and their commitment to practicing their art, writing new songs, and recording and performing whenever they could, both virtually and live.

Following our Partner Artists' lead, Music Maker is evolving into a nimbler organization with the ability to produce and deliver content in new ways. We are growing our audience online and have a new website to facilitate this growth. If you have not yet checked out our new website - [www.musicmaker.org](http://www.musicmaker.org) - please do!

Throughout 2021, the fearlessness and optimism of our Partner Artists was mirrored by the determined and open-hearted patronage of our steadfast supporters. We are humbled, grateful, and motivated by the ongoing support shown for traditional American music and the musicians who create it.

We are committed to seeing our Partner Artists through to more stable times. In the meantime, our educational programs continue to flourish and our Partner Artists continue to create. We hope to see you - in person or online - to celebrate new music in 2022!

With hearts full of gratitude,

Tim and Denise Duffy



**MUSIC MAKER**  
FOUNDATION

# SUSTENANCE RELIEF

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We maintained our commitment to support Partner Artists as Covid continued to suppress most live performance opportunities for all performers, particularly the senior musicians of color that we serve. Artists have lost close to half their income, and continue to rely on our assistance to pay critical health and utility bills and to keep groceries in the fridge.

## Grants

In 2021, we distributed 1049 grants to 135 artists totaling \$207,568, an increase of 12% over 2020 funding distributed.



## Served Artists in 12 states

North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, South Dakota, California, Texas, and Virginia

## Services

### Assisted artists with:

- Vaccination scheduling and information
- Finding medical providers
- Finding and applying for assistance with other aid organizations

### Purchased and contracted for:

- Major home repairs, including a new roof for Alice Vines and a new HVAC system for Ernie Vincent
- Car repairs for artists
- Used vehicles for artists without transportation
- Studio repairs

### Enabled ongoing artistry by:

- Producing and booking virtual performances and Artist Talks
  - Purchasing instruments and instrument repairs
  - Providing art supplies and materials to partner musicians who are also visual artists
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# SUSTENANCE OVERVIEW

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Each year, we survey our artists to understand their health, well-being, and financial situation.

There was little change in circumstances year-over-year (YOY) from 2020: not significantly worse, but not demonstrably better. Covid continues to have a serious financial impact on the artist community. **All artists have lost income**, again, due to lack of gigs; 67% of respondents have lost more than \$5,000 from canceled performance opportunities, leaving many to live on annual incomes of less than \$12,000. Most are spending more than they bring in each month, and the majority are skipping payments for recurring monthly expenses, such as utilities and credit cards. All those surveyed rely on assistance from Music Maker to pay for essentials like food, utilities, and medicine.

Due to financial pressures, many artists are foregoing **healthcare**. A third of respondents have physical ailments that are not being addressed, and YOY, 36% more artists have had difficulty maintaining their supply of medicines. Our social worker and volunteer services teams assisted with scheduling vaccine appointments; thankfully, 81% of those surveyed have received a Covid vaccine. Major support was also given to address dental care this past year.

In terms of **safe housing**, an increasing number of artists have had structural issues with their homes including storm damage, mold, failing roofs and floors, and leaks. Fewer artists are living independently and many have moved in with family members.

We worked alongside our Partner Artists to address numerous substandard housing issues. We coordinated with contractors and supported home and studio repairs, including a new HVAC system for Ernie Vincent, who lives in sweltering New Orleans, LA.

**WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD ANY AIR CONDITIONING. WE WOULD HAVE SUFFERED. SERIOUSLY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN REALLY BAD BECAUSE I WASN'T WORKING AT THE TIME.**  
- ERNIE VINCENT

**Artists  
responding to  
our survey:**

100% have lost income  
85% are > 65 yrs. of age  
67% make < \$12K/yr

One of the larger undertakings this past year was in support of Alice Vines. We reached out to her in mid-November for our annual survey. As she answered questions, we learned that the roof of her home was completely failing. Her walls and electrical system were damaged and she had no heat. Within a week, we had replaced the entire roof and made electrical repairs so that she had a warm, dry home in time for her and her family to celebrate Thanksgiving.

**MUSIC MAKER HAS BEEN A GREAT BLESSING TO MYSELF AND MY FAMILY. Y'ALL DOING A WONDERFUL JOB.**  
-ALICE VINES

Additionally, inadequate or non-existent **transportation** remains a barrier to accessing healthcare and maintaining independence. We continued efforts to address this challenge by supporting car repairs and the purchase of used vehicles to increase mobility.

Looking forward, **inflationary trends** represent an increasing risk to artists who, based on the 2020 survey results, continue to suffer the financial consequences of Covid while living hand-to-mouth.

As of the fall of 2021, recognizing that Covid may be an ongoing challenge that ebbs and flows in the future, we are beginning to categorize most new aid requests as Emergency Aid, rather than splitting those requests into Covid or non-Covid grants.

# PERFORMANCE

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Due to Covid, in-person events and performances were once again severely limited. We continued to produce [virtual performances and events\\*](#) to offset the loss of in-person experiences and debuted a new website to showcase content. In what felt like a balm for our souls, a number of our artists were able to [perform live](#) at a few engagements with safety protocols in place in the summer and early fall.

We released nine new albums, including [Sacred Soul of North Carolina \(album and film\)](#), a marathon recording session in a makeshift storefront studio in a 100-year-old building in the tiny town of Fountain, NC. Alice Vines of the Glorifying Vines Sisters invited almost a dozen local groups to come lift their voices and represent the region's unique Sacred Soul traditions. Supporting artists in the creation of these one-of-a-kind recordings is a special privilege and of deep importance culturally.

## Virtual

### [The 7th Annual Freight Train Blues](#)

A series of five filmed concerts featuring Amythyst Kiah, Alexa Rose, Johnny Ray Daniels, The Hamiltones, and Harvey Dalton Arnold was streamed live on Friday evenings in May and June.

### [In Conversation](#)

A virtual series in which artist, luthier, and author of [Hanging Tree Guitars](#), Freeman Vines, speaks with voices from the field of contemporary art. In 2021 the series featured Vernon Reid, Dom Flemons, Matt Marble, Jaki Shelton Green, and Rev. Osagyefo Sekou.

\*All of our virtual concerts and talks are available to stream on YouTube.

## Live

- In September we returned to the [Telluride Blues and Brews Festival](#) with the Gospel Comforters and the Music Maker Blues Revue featuring Fred Thomas, Hermon Hitson, Sugar Harp, Albert White, Robert Lee Coleman, and Ardie Dean.
- Pat "Mother Blues" Cohen and Jeffrey Scott at [Durham Athletic Park](#)
- Faith and Harmony at [Ol' Front Porch Festival](#)
- Robert Lee Coleman at [Savannah Jazz Festival](#)
- Glorifying Vines Sisters at the [Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art](#)

**THANKS TO MUSIC MAKER, I HAVE LIVED OUT MY ROCK-N-ROLL FANTASY.  
RETURNING TO TELLURIDE FOR THE BLUES AND BREWS FESTIVAL WAS A GREAT TRIUMPH.  
MUSIC MAKER HELPED ME STAY AFLOAT THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND NOW I HAVE A NEW JOB  
THAT I CAN SUPPORT MY FAMILY WITH. ~LESTER GARNER WALLACE**

# EDUCATION

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The Hanging Tree Guitars exhibit continued to travel throughout the southeast as did a number of additional exhibits showcasing our Partner Artists and their contributions to American music.

- [Hanging Tree Guitars](#) at Greenville Museum of Art and Joyner Library in Greenville, NC, and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, NC
- [Blue Muse](#) at Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History in Danville, VA
- [Our Living Past](#) at the Birthplace of Country Music in Bristol, VA
- [The Dirty South](#) - group show featuring work by Freeman Vines at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art in Richmond, VA, and the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in Houston, TX



# THANK YOU.



Guitar Lightnin' Lee, Alabama Slim, Little Freddie King  
Photo by Tim Duffy