“They said that I play like a man, but they're using the wrong terminology. The main thing is that I play so good”

– Beverly “Guitar” Watkins (1939–2019)
Dear Friends of Music Maker,

In February, board member Carey Barnes, Denise and I traveled to England, where Music Maker artist Freeman Vines had his museum debut at The Turner Contemporary Museum of Art. We were so excited to see one of our musicians from Eastern North Carolina getting international recognition, including a beautiful color photograph of one of his guitars in The Guardian.

Upon our return, we hosted record executive Bruce Watson of Fat Possum and Bible & Tire Records at our new Music Maker East studio in Fountain, NC. Bruce recorded and filmed 13 Sacred Soul groups in five days for an upcoming album and documentary. Sacred Soul artists, the Dedicated Men of Zion, recorded their debut album for Bible and Tire Records last fall. We secured a European booking agency for them and they were set to hit Music Maker East in February and join our other groups at our new Music Maker East studio in Fountain, NC. Bruce recorded and filmed 13 Sacred Soul groups in five days for an upcoming album and documentary. Sacred Soul artists, the Dedicated Men of Zion, recorded their debut album for Bible and Tire Records last fall. We secured a European booking agency for them and they were set to hit the festival circuit this spring and summer. Then suddenly, along with the rest of the world, all plans were put on hold.

Each year Music Maker books and manages about 500 artist performances at musical events throughout the US and abroad. Back in February, it appeared that 2020 was going to be another busy year, but by early April, nearly all of our Partner Artists’ gigs were canceled. We knew the financial impact and disappointment for our musicians would be heavy. With the need to isolate, and protect folks over 65, the needs of our musician community grew at the very time the pandemic wiped out their income.

Music Maker chose not to lose heart or momentum, but to pivot hard and lean into this pandemic era and the challenges it presents. A number of stalwart supporters put together a $60,000 matching gift challenge. Through the generosity of hundreds of individuals and significant support from a few granting foundations, that challenge was met with more than $100,000 worth of support.

Since then, Music Maker has been able to more than double the amount of financial assistance provided to our Partner Artists and replace 50% of our musicians’ lost gig income for April, May, and June. We were also able to reach out to our friends at the New Orleans Preservation Hall and welcome 12 new musicians to our Sustenance Program.

Our Artist Services Specialist, Christelle Ndong, MSW formed a COVID-19 Care Team with our most trusted volunteers. They have been assessing and monitoring artist needs with biweekly check-ins. In response to those needs, we arranged grocery deliveries, connected artists with other assistance programs, provided gift cards so others can shop for artists in isolation, and more. The artists often tell Christelle that the calls from her and her team of volunteers mean as much to them as the prescription medicine or home deliveries of food. Isolation and loneliness weigh heavy on our Partner Artists, and we all need each other during this challenging time.

Our small, dedicated team banded together to keep our mission alive. Miraculously, Jeffrey Brown of PBS NewsHour responded to our inquiry and put together a feature story on Pat “Mother Blues” Cohen and how she is handling this crisis. With no money to give, she gives her talent, singing to her brother and the other residents at the nursing home where he resides in Salisbury, NC. There was an overwhelming response to this piece, bringing in many new supporters to our mission. We welcome you all and thank you dearly for your support.

While we are saddened by the merciless toll of COVID-19 on the elderly and in communities of color, we are also inspired by the increased awareness and demand for social justice and racial equity that is arising in our nation. Breaking the silence of white supremacy and reckoning honestly with our history, and present, is the only way America will ever fulfill its promise of liberty and justice for all.

Freeman Vines examines his personal journey of being Black in rural America in his new book and exhibition entitled Hanging Tree Guitars. This exhibit was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. It is premiering near Freeman’s hometown at the Greenville Museum of Art this summer and will be touring the country for years to come. We made a virtual exhibit at exhibit.hangingtreeguitars.com so everyone, everywhere can experience this work. The book and exhibition are the culmination of a five-year partnership between Freeman and Music Maker. Don't miss this incredibly moving book, now available at musicmaker.org.

This summer, we were able to continue our Freight Train Blues series online. We will be offering livestream concerts throughout the fall, so please keep an eye on our social media and website tour calendar so you can join us. We remain steadfast in our mission and we will survive and learn from this experience, so that when we get to the other side, we will be stronger and better equipped to continue to help the artists we serve.

We need our American Bards at such times, they give us something to hold onto, a moment of brightness and understanding and relief from the day to day in this world of crisis. Thank you so much for supporting the Music Makers!

- Tim & Denise Duffy

“We need our American Bards... they give us something to hold onto.”
Following a group show at the Turner Contemporary in Kent, UK, Freeman Vines’ work will premiere in the US with the solo exhibition: *Hanging Tree Guitars* at the Greenville Museum of Art.

**Greenville Museum of Art** (Greenville, NC)

**Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center** (Portsmouth, VA)
Feb. 15 2021 – May 7, 2021

**The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art** (Winston-Salem, NC)
Jun. 9, 2021 – Sept. 15, 2021

**Freeman Vines: Hanging Tree Guitars**

Go to exhibit.hangingtreeguitars.com to explore Freeman Vines’ virtual exhibition!

Hanging Tree Guitars at Greenville Museum of Art, 2020 © W. Wojdynski

**Other Exhibit Dates**

**Blue Muse**
Phillips Museum of Art (Lancaster, PA)  
Jan. 19, 2021 – May 15, 2021

**Our Living Past**
Birthplace of Country Music Museum (Bristol, VA)  
Piedmont Arts (Martinsville, VA)  
Apr. 18, 2021 – Sep. 30, 2021  
Jan. 21, 2022 – Mar. 12, 2022

**Hanging Tree Guitars Exhibition Sponsorship: The National Endowment for the Humanities and Music Maker Relief Foundation together: Exploring the human endeavor. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.**
NC roots
music series

8/20  Lakota John
9/17  The Hamiltones
10/15 Dedicated Men of Zion
11/19  Martha Spencer
12/17  Big Ron Hunter

Tune in every 3rd Thursday at 6pm for these live stream concerts
musicmaker.org/NCrootsmusicseries

IN CONVERSATION:
FREEMAN VINES
ONLINE ARTIST TALKS
FEATURING:
AUG 27 NDUBUISI EZELUOMBA
SEP 24 VALERIE CASSEL OLIVER
OCT 22 LONNIE HOLLEY
NOV 12 HANNAH COLLINS
TUNE IN: MUSICMAKER.ORG/INCONVERSATION

CULTURE BLOCKS

FREEMAN VINES
SINGING FROM THE BLOODY SOIL OF NORTH CAROLINA’S JIM CROW ERA, SCULPTOR AND LUTHERAN, HE LISTENS TO WHAT THE WOOD SAYS TO HIM AS HE CARVES, AND HE USES ONLY OLD- TIME TOOLS AND HIS SPIRIT TO CRAFT HIS GUITARS, SINGULAR AND EVOCATIVE. SOLUTIONS.

“IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN WHAT IT IS, AND MAYBE IT'S A FEELING, BUT IT'S A TONE... THAT I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING.”

FREEMAN VINES'S ROOTS ARE DEEP AND STRONG, DRAWING FROM THE BLOODY SOIL OF NORTH CAROLINA’S JIM CROW ERA. SCULPTOR AND LUTHERAN, HE LISTENS TO WHAT THE WOOD SAYS TO HIM AS HE CARVES, AND HE USES ONLY OLD-TIME TOOLS AND HIS SPIRIT TO CRAFT HIS GUITARS, SINGULAR AND EVOCATIVE.

DURING THE SIXTIES, HE MADE MUSIC ON FRONT PORCHES AND SHOT MUSKETS, AND HIS MUSIC IS MAKING HIM THINK. FREEMAN HAS TRANSFORMED OLD PIECES OF BOUND WOOD INTO SCULPTURES, AND EVEN HANGING TREES INTO WORDLESS MUSICAL WORKS OF ART. THE TONE HE'S LONG SEARCHED FOR, THE TONE OF A TRUTH SEEKER, REVERBERATES BOTH IN HIS SCULPTURES AND IN THE SOUL OF THIS ARTIST.

COPYRIGHT © 2020 BY GARY DUNK
The pandemic has dug itself deep into the already struggling healthcare systems and economies of the rural South. One of Music Maker’s newer partner artists, Willie Farmer, felt its impact immediately. A mechanic by trade and lifelong resident of Duck Hill, Mississippi (pop. 732), Willie has played music his entire life and represents the rich blues traditions of his state. Since partnering with Willie in 2018, Music Maker was able to secure a record deal with legendary producer Bruce Watson and book him on some of the biggest stages around. Things were on the up-and-up for Mr. Farmer.

In March of 2020, shortly after COVID-19 began to spread through the South, Willie saw all of his upcoming gigs wiped off his calendar—including his debut at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Fast forward a couple weeks later and his mechanic work had slowed down substantially. On April 23 brutal storms ripped through North Central Mississippi, destroying a substantial portion of Willie’s roof. We see this in our work every day—life’s curveballs are relentless, making hard situations even harder. The cycle of poverty doles out constant obstacles, and doesn’t stop just because of a pandemic or a natural disaster.

When asked about his experience as a Partner Artist Willie had this to say: “Music Maker is top of the line. When they say they’re going to help, they do it. There aren’t too many people like that. People tend to tell you one thing and do another, but Music Maker does exactly what they say. I’m proud to be a Music Maker.”
**2019/20 FINANCIAL REPORT**

- **Fundraising**: $86,921
- **Management**: $63,185
- **Programs**: $890,896

Total Budget: $1,041,002

- 8% of the budget is allocated to Fundraising.
- 6% to Management.
- 86% to Programs.

Audited financial statements available upon request.

**WHAT WE’VE ACCOMPLISHED**

- **13,196** Musician Grants
- **8,018** Performances
- **2,643** Songs Released
- **457** Partner Artists
- **32** Countries Toured
- **26** Years
- **3** Programs
- **1** Mission

- Freeman Vines' first international showing of his sculptures was featured in *The Guardian* with photos.
- Beverly "Guitar Watkins, Sam Clayton, and Lee Gates passed on.
- Music Maker helped Willie James Williams, Little Pink Anderson, Ester Mae Wilbourn, and Willie Farmer complete major home repairs, from replacing roofs to rewiring electric.
- Robert Finley made it to the semi-finals on *America's Got Talent*.
- In late February Music Maker, with the help of Pastor Alice Vines, gathered 13 of Eastern North Carolina's finest Sacred Soul groups for a week of recording sessions in Fountain, NC at Music Maker East with Bible & Tire Records. The recording session showcased both young tradition bearers and their forebearers.
- We helped Sam Frazier, Jr. and Ironing Board Sam refurnished their homes.
- Sadly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, every Spring, Summer, and Fall gig has been cancelled, most notably New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, Telluride Blues & Brews, Baton Rouge Blues Festival, Porto Blues Festival, Celebrate Brooklyn, and the Savannah Jazz Festival.
- The *Dedicated Men of Zion's* release *Can't Turn Me Around* was featured on NPR's All Songs Considered New Music Fridays.
- Music Maker 25 at Duke University was a rousing success with nearly sold-out crowds for all seven shows. The festival, celebrating Music Maker's 25th anniversary, brought in Music Maker artists and friends from across the country and featured more than 50 musicians.
- Pat "Mother Blues" Cohen was featured on PBS NewsHour, Rollingstone.com, and CNN.com for her social distance performances at nursing homes during the pandemic.
- The annual *Freight Train Blues* concert series went virtual and featured livestream performances from Phil Cook, Hiss Golden Messenger, Mandolin Orange, Lightnin' Wells, and Thomas Rhaynt. The art installations with large-scale portraits of Ironing Board Sam and Guitar Lightnin' Lee are still on display throughout New Orleans from last spring's premiere of *Blue Muse*. Over 25 million people have seen their portraits throughout the city. Special thanks to Russell Lord and the New Orleans Museum of Art!
**Program Notes**

**Sam Frazier, Jr.** is living day by day. All of his local gigs have been canceled and he is unable to stay completely isolated due to his dialysis treatments, which happen three times a week. Music Maker provides Sam with grocery deliveries and granted him a new guitar so that he could continue songwriting while in isolation. © T. Duffy

**Ester Mae Wilbourn**, lead singer of The Como Mamas, received an emergency grant in April to replace her roof, renewing her sense of security while in quarantine. Music Maker is currently working to get more critical repairs done to Ester’s home in Como, MS. © A. Greenhood

Another legend gone. We are deeply saddened by the loss of longtime Partner Artist **Lee Gates**, who passed away on April 15th, 2020. Born in Pontotoc, MS in 1937, his tenacity on the electric guitar was only matched by his physical presence. © T. Duffy

In the midst of the COVID-19, our good friends at **Cathead Distillery** shifted their operations to produce hand sanitizer. Cathead has supported Music Maker’s mission for over 10 years, and their desire to help important Southern musicians hasn’t gone away in the pandemic. Cathead graciously donated Comfort & Mercy Hand Sanitizer to our Partner Artists.
2020 ALBUM RELEASES

Various Artists, Amazing Grace

Harvey Dalton Arnold, Stories To Live Up To

Various Artists, Hanging Tree Guitars

Dedicated Men of Zion, Can’t Turn Me Around (Bible & Tire Recording Co.)

Various Artists, Grotto Sessions (En Avant La Zizique)

Hanging Tree Guitars – Available Now

“A fabulous book—just profoundly beautiful, filled with extraordinary materials, and terrific photographs.”
– Carrie Mae Weems

Price: $28.00
Limited number of signed 1st edition books available. Visit musicmaker.org/shop to purchase and for more info.

To meet Freeman Vines is to meet America itself. An artist, a luthier and a spiritual philosopher, Vines’ life is a roadmap of the truths and contradictions of the American South.

In 2015 Vines befriends photographer Timothy Duffy and the two begin to document the guitars, setting off a mutual outpouring of the creative spirit. But when Vines acquires a mysterious stack of wood from the site of a lynching, Vines and Duffy find themselves each grappling with the spiritual unrest and the psychic toll of racial violence living in the very grain of America.

Published by the Bitter Southerner in association with Music Maker Relief Foundation. (1st edition, paperback, 8.5 x 11in, 159 pages, 80 duotone images)

Visit musicmaker.org/shop for more info and to purchase!
With a Legacy Gift, you can transform the work of Music Maker Relief Foundation for years to come. Your gift preserves roots music, and champions those who make it, so that future generations can access their cultural heritage and continue this vital work.

We have history. We have community. Together we can create a legacy.

There are numerous ways to plan a gift for the future. Your Legacy Gift:
✓ Cost you nothing during your lifetime.
✓ Preserves your savings and cash flow.
✓ Allows you to be more generous than you ever thought possible.
✓ Leaves a lasting statement to the world about who you are and what's important to you.

If you would like more information about creating your legacy, please contact Mollie O’Reilly at 919-643-2456 or mollie@musicmaker.org.

Create Your Legacy

Thank you to our Generous Donors!

**Founders Circle ($100k+)**
- Anonymous
- Carye Barnes and Ray Wheler
- Carol D'Ambrosio
- Lucy Helen
- Rich and Lisa Hennessy
- Susan and Brian Kelly
- Greg and Betty Luynd
- Loni Manto and Beverly Ann Crilly
- Parsons Family Foundation
- The Prat Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation
- John Powell
- David and Sara Rolley
- Glenn Scott and Barbara Schapiro Scott
- Metabolic Studio
- Richard S. Smith
- Rick Teller and Kathleen Roberts
- Harry L. Wiltfong Foundation
- W.B. & R.B. Croswell Foundation

**Champions ($5k+)**
- Al and Carnie Rumsfeld
- Carlson Family Foundation
- Meg Strachan
- David Moody
- David Pattison
- Bill Packiet and Rita Pierce
- SBG Productions
- Adam Sharaf
- Joseph Simpson
- Henry and Shelly Skler
- Patricia Thomas
- Thompson Family Foundation of Minnesota
- T&J Handmade Vodka

**Fellows ($2500+)**
- Anonymous
- Bogen, Inc.
- Bonnie Bait
- Christine and Marvin Jones
- Dan Reilly
- David and John Stearnby
- David and Peggy Moore
- Gordon Winigers
- John Igini
- Kenney Wayne Shepherd
- Long Family Foundation
- Lucy Duffy
- Robert and Janice Tyler
- Salvator Musco
- Steve and Lori Doles
- Tom Wolicki

**Ambassadors ($1000+)**
- David Adair
- Neel and Margaret Albert
- Anonymous
- Steve Bohn
- Paul Bartol
- Bauer Family Foundation, Inc.
- Charlie and Madhavi Bengal
- Elizabeth Birmingham
- Aaron Benson
- John Buley
- Sharon Bushnell
- John Carnes
- David Chais
- Edith Collinsworth Memorial Fund
- Beth Cooper
- Jim and Kelly Cipert
- Thomas Davis and Maureen Zone
- Mimi DeJanus
- Paul Demuth
- Tim Dinsen
- Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
- Bruce Egan
- John Elber
- Lee Fikes
- Laurel Fredlake
- Kent Friedichsen
- Matthew Fyre

**Angels ($500+)**
- Peter and Medra Gay Aldrich
- Barbara Anderson
- Sarah Angel
- Anonymous
- Beth Asdungan
- Moss Baldwin
- Andrew Bogen
- Scott Bergoin
- Rockway Nonprofit Medical Group
- Blake and Richard Bradford
- Doris Brill
- Mark Bresler
- Christine Brijoe
- Callan Brown
- Sanford Burnham
- John and Nancy Capitano
- Victor and Gayle Gagliano
- Heath Garland
- Cindy and Joy Greppner
- Heather Gardiner
- Susan Hall
- Phyllis and Janet Whaley
- Cynthia Hardman
- Jonathan and Kristin Harris
- Eric and Lynn Henson
- Victor Hickerson
- John Hillhouse
- Stephen Holohan
- Honorable Order of Blue Goose
- Julie Iwane
- The Jones Family Charitable Fund
- Douglas Joyce and Colleen Boulware
- Melvin & Sylvia Kafka Foundation
- Giosia F. Ross Foundation
- Dan Krejkiwicz
- Lisa and Steve Lackey
- James Leavitt
- Douglas MacLean and Susan Wolf
- Kenneth Martin
- Alan Mayfield
- Frances and David McCallough
- Meag Mag
- Michael E. Marcus
- David Nelson
- Kate O’Brayke and Jim DeLaurian
- John J. O’Neil Johnson
- Martha Orlova
- Neal Patterson
- PFI/Live
- Bob Presthus
- Progressive Insurance Foundation
- Nancy Putnam
- David Quist
- Drum Corps
- Bob Riemann and Rachel Kaplan
- Jordan Rinker
- Logan and Emily Rott
- Matt Rust
- Phil and Catherine Sains
- Patricia Santini
- Walter Sinnott-Armstrong
- Vada Staha
- David Steaknicht
- The Steeple Family Fund
- The Stimmel Family Charitable Fund
- Wayne Stremberg
- Mary and John Suess
- James Susan
- Forresta
- Maddie Wessel
- Norm and Linda Wieland
- Sherry and Gary Wood
- Allen Zachal and Ellen Benson
- Kaci Scow
- Natalie and James Pierce
- Bruce Pinet
- Harald Poznanski
- David Poser
- Mihai Radulescu
- Estelle Raimondo
- Russell Rhodes
- David Richardson
- Vanessa Robertson
- James Ryaner
- Patricia Rubin
- William Scarborough
- Connie Schabarum
- Shatiti Family Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation
- Wen Shah
- Dana Simms

**Partners ($250+)**
- Chuck Adams
- Kenneth Adler
- John Allen
- Bruce and Yoko Allen
- Boyan Anthony
- Jamie Anthony
- Joyw, Appleham
- Denise Aquilina
- Neil and Viva Araki
- Kent Argenta
- Terry Baker
- Joyce Baird
- Banks Insurance Services
- Joe Barrett
- Susan Barnes-Gelt
- Mary and Nancy Baskin
- John and Patricia Becherer
- Gerard Benham
- Dana Benetti
- Ted Bolden
- Carol Benson
- Cary and Lynne Berk
- Charles Bigger
- Rick and Cindy Bland
- Rosa Blumenfeld
- Mary Bluhmert
- Renae Bosco and Jim Thomey
- Bill Brown
- John Bottino
- Bill Bykovsky
- John and Catherine Cusato
- Aaron Dolos
- Dana Romo
- Scott Rollen
- Bethany and Kelly Rock
- Tyler Haskell
- Donald Hayes
- Linda Hecla
- Bob and Nancy Henderson
- James and Jennifer Hendrick
- John Henle
- James and Corinne Herbert
- Scott Harrison
- William Hendry
- Sarah Ingrassia
- Chris Stirling
- David Jackson
- Karen Janes
- Ralph Johnson
- Karen Johnson
- Joseph Jones
- Ellen Jongerius
- Charles Johns
- Mike Kaprus
- Louise and Samuel Kaymen
- Kelly and John Keeling
- Todd Krueger and David Kelley
- Scott Redmond
- Bethany and Kelly RP Kelly
- Robert Kiley
- Frank Korba and Ellen Causol
- Catherine and Vance Kramer
- Larry Kerr
- Robert and Stephanie Kristina
- Ruth Lathia
- Doug Langille
- John Langton and Lisa McDonald
- Robert Langston
- Joseph Lanza
- Paul and June Latt
- Scott Law
- Neville Lebstein
- Eric Lemar
- Wendy Leonard
- Patricia Leonard
- Ann Lief
- John Leduc and Doris Matel
- Michael Liban
- Steve London
- Edith Loudin
- Karen and Gregory Mack
- Richard and Alice Ellington
- Robert Enrich
- Wayne Erickson
- Amanda Freden
- Catherine Fogin
- Flavia Fong/Tari Fagan
- Richard and Donna Fabos
- Rosy Fomillo
- Eliza Farran
- Richard Fauthon
- Patrick Faust
- John and Jane Finch
- Stephanie Ann Finz
- Johnny and Zoe Foster
- Michael Franklin and Marian O’Connor Franklin
- Lisa Freed
- Nancy Freeman
- Lindsey Frey
- Kathleen Gaffney
- Mark and Manseas Galloway
- Douglas Gunn
- Patricia Gavald
- Susan and Joe Geck
- Charles Gandy
- William Gibson
- Michael Gilchrist
- Karen Graslie
- Don Grogan
- Owen Gryn Jr.
- Mary Hall
- Frances Hall
- Mariane Hamilton
- Ron Hartman
- Charles Harrington
- Laurie Harrison
- Tesc Harris
- hackel Haskel
- Tyler Haskell
- Donald Hayes
- Linda Hecla
- Bob and Nancy Henderson
- James and Jennifer Hendrick
- John Henle
- James and Corinne Herbert
- Scott Harrison
- William Hendry
- Sarah Ingrassia
- Chris Stirling
- David Jackson
- Karen Janes
- Ralph Johnson
- Karen Johnson
- Joseph Jones
- Ellen Jongerius
- Charles Johns
- Mike Kaprus
- Louise and Samuel Kaymen
- Kelly and John Keeling
- Todd Krueger and David Kelley
- Scott Redmond
- Bethany and Kelly RP Kelly
- Robert Kiley
- Frank Korba and Ellen Causol
- Catherine and Vance Kramer
- Larry Kerr
- Robert and Stephanie Kristina
- Ruth Lathia
- Doug Langille
- John Langton and Lisa McDonald
- Robert Langston
- Joseph Lanza
- Paul and June Latt
- Scott Law
- Neville Lebstein
- Eric Lemar
- Wendy Leonard
- Patricia Leonard
- Ann Lief
- John Leduc and Doris Matel
- Michael Liban
- Steve London
- Edith Loudin
- Karen and Gregory Mack

Thank you to Our Partners!