2021 ANNUAL REPORT
A Year of Renewal
OUR MISSION

Music Maker Foundation tends the roots of traditional American music by meeting the day-to-day needs of the artists who create it, ensuring their voices are heard, and giving all people access to our nation’s hidden musical treasures.

OUR PROGRAMS

Sustenance

To ensure that the day-to-day needs of the most vulnerable artists are met, we provide grants and social services to musicians who are in crisis or who live in chronic poverty.

Performance

To help our artists build their careers, their income and their skills through touring, we book shows for them and provide management services and professional development.

Education

To ensure that American roots music is always accessible to current and future generations, we mount exhibitions, stage youth engagement programs and document our artists’ music and stories in a permanent archive.
**OUR TEAM**
Timothy Duffy, Executive Director
Denise Duffy, Managing Director
Gabi Mendick, Advancement Coordinator
Brittany Anderson, MSW, Artist Services Coordinator
Kim Anderson, Finance Coordinator
Nick Loss-Eaton, Social Media and Media Relations
Ardie Dean, Artist Liaison and Producer

**OUR ADVISORY BOARD**
Dan Auerbach
Bonnie Raitt
Dickey Betts
Jackson Browne
Jerry Harrison
Jimmy Herring
Taj Mahal
Tift Merritt
Pura Fé
John Price
Tom Rankin
Ken Shepherd
Kenny Wayne Shepherd
Derek Trucks
Susan Tedeschi
Pete Townshend
Don Was
Lightnin’ Wells

**OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
Timothy Duffy, President
Rich Henneberry, Treasurer
Catherine Elkins, Secretary
Denise Duffy, Chief Financial Officer
Carey Barnes
Saramel Evans
Dom Flemons
Bill Puckett
Henry Slyker
Rick Teller
Tom Wallack

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**OUR PARTNERS**
2020/21 FINANCIAL REPORT

*Audited financial statements available upon request

**WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED**

- **PROGRAMS** $810,157
- **FUNDRAISING** $65,376
- **MANAGEMENT** $63,750
- **TOTAL EXPENSES** $939,283

$86%

$7%

$7%

WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

14,194 MUSICIAN GRANTS

8,068 PERFORMANCES

1,419,400 MUSICIAN GRANTS

2,748 SONGS RELEASED

465 PARTNER ARTISTS

32 COUNTRIES TOURED

48 EXHIBITIONS

3 MISSIONS

3 PROGRAMS

27 YEARS

1 MISSION

3 PROGRAMS

27 YEARS

32 COUNTRIES TOURED

48 EXHIBITIONS

465 PARTNER ARTISTS

2,748 SONGS RELEASED

8,068 PERFORMANCES

14,194 MUSICIAN GRANTS

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LEFT: Will Sexton and Bruce Watson of Bible & Tire Recording Co. visit Johnny Ray Daniels in Farmville, North Carolina, before a recording session in Memphis, Tennessee. Photo by Tim Duffy. RIGHT: Ernie Vincent has a new album coming out on Cornelius Chapel Records in 2021. Photo by Tim Duffy.
Dear Friends of Music Maker,

Music Maker remains steadfast in support of our mission, tending the roots of American music. Despite challenges across the globe and in the lives of our partner artists, so much joy, positivity and glorious music was created in the last year. We were extremely humbled and inspired by the generosity and stalwart support our donors extended to us—which empowered Music Maker to increase grants to artists substantially throughout the pandemic and this time of rebuilding. In the year ending June 30, 2021, Music Maker made 998 grants to 92 artists, keeping them afloat when their gigs ran dry.

The launch of “Hanging Tree Guitars”—artist and luthier Freeman Vines’ book, CD and exhibition—was truly stunning. We sold out of our first book printing and Freeman continues to receive major press attention and much-deserved respect. Last July, the “Hanging Tree Guitars” exhibit opened at the Greenville Museum of Art and the Joyner Library near Freeman’s hometown in North Carolina. More than 70,000 people viewed Freeman’s work, and the museum reported the most diverse crowds in its history. From there, “Hanging Tree Guitars” traveled west to the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Freeman attended the opening reception along with 300 celebratory guests. Those in attendance included Freeman’s family members, the Glorifying Vines Sisters, who performed a set of their inspiring gospel music. It truly was a glorious evening.

The story of “Hanging Tree Guitars” is the story of Music Maker. We meet, befriend and partner with true artists who follow a deep calling within themselves. Six years ago, musician and advisory board member Lightnin’ Wells introduced us to Freeman Vines. Our work with Freeman led us to his sisters, the Glorifying Vines Sisters, a group that has been together since 1958. The Vines sisters led us to their nephews, the Dedicated Men of Zion, whose release for Bible & Tire Recording Co. won praise from NPR. The Dedicated Men of Zion led us to their sisters and cousins, Faith & Harmony.

This treasure trove of gospel from Eastern North Carolina is so joyous, yet
so deeply rooted in tradition that we call it “Sacred Soul.” It is such an apt name for this music of peace and resistance, a music that can climb the highest mountain. Listening to these rhythms, it is so apparent how this tradition gave rise to modern Soul and R&B, because you can barely stay in your chair. Our recent collaboration with Bible & Tire—a documentary film and album called “The Sacred Soul of North Carolina”—exposes this incredible Pan-African musical community and shares the stories of these artists.

This spring and summer, we got back out on the road and met many new artists, more than making up for a year spent stuck in the office. Artist discovery will continue next year and beyond. There is no end to the great river of music out there, and each artist leads us to another—if not five more! How many artists are out there like Freeman Vines? We’ll never know if we don’t go looking. A simple introduction to Freeman years ago launched countless journeys for Music Maker. And so, we can’t wait to see and hear who else is out there and to share their gifts with all of you as we re-engage with music lovers in performance and at exhibitions.

Here we are, here we go. As our dear friend Ironing Board Sam sings, “Life is like a see-saw, it goes up and down. Hold on—hold on!—to those little handlebars!”

—Tim and Denise Duffy
Freeman Vines visits his Hanging Tree Guitars exhibit at SECCA, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Photo by Tim Duffy.

**Freeman Vines: Hanging Tree Guitars**  
**Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center** (Portsmouth, Virginia)  
May 1–Aug 1, 2022

**North Dakota Museum of Art** (Grand Forks, North Dakota)  
Sep–Dec, 2022

**Maria V. Howard Art Center** (Rocky Mount, North Carolina)  
May 19–Aug 13, 2023  
The National Endowment for the Humanities and Music Maker Foundation together: Exploring the human endeavor. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Our Living Past: Music Maker Portraits**  
**Birthplace of Country Music** (Bristol, Virginia)  
Apr 18–Sep 30, 2021

**Piedmont Arts** (Martinsville, Virginia)  
Jan 21–Mar 12, 2022

**Blue Muse: Timothy Duffy’s Southern Photographs**  
**Phillips Museum of Art** (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)  
Jan 17–Apr 28, 2023

**The Dirty South—group show featuring work by Freeman Vines**  
**Contemporary Art Museum Houston** (Houston, Texas)  
Oct 23, 2021-Feb. 6, 2022

**Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art** (Bentonville, Arkansas)  
March 12–July 25, 2022
Like our new look? We’ve completely overhauled our website—with beautiful stories about our partner artists, journeys of discovery through different genres of music and an interface that’s much easier to use.

You might also notice that we have shortened our name to be less of a mouthful, but we are still doing all the great work we have always done. From here forward, our name is simply Music Maker Foundation.

Check out the new website at musicmaker.org
THE MUSIC MAKER METHOD

A Look at What Makes Our Foundation Unique

What makes the Music Maker Foundation tick? Two obsessions. The first is our insatiable desire to search out the unheard musicians who keep American musical traditions alive. The second is our insatiable desire for equity, our need to form long-term partnerships with musicians that ensure their music lives on for future generations and that poverty does not crush them.

This makes us unique among all the nonprofits and academic institutions engaged in the preservation and archiving of America’s native music.

“Very few organizations in the universities, in government or otherwise are totally dedicated to the preservation of the kind of music that Music Maker focuses on, and there is no engagement with the musicians themselves,” says Bruce Jackson, the pioneering American folklorist who is now a SUNY Distinguished Professor and the James Agee Professor of American Culture at the University at Buffalo. “Music Maker not only presents the music, but creates a body of knowledge and a human community of musicians that is invaluable. No one else does anything like it.”

Our method of creating that body of knowledge and community of musicians arises from our two obsessions. From our beginnings, Music Maker founders Tim and

Denise Duffy visited small towns and big cities, following the music up and down and across the country. Music Maker built its family of partner musicians in person and on the road, and today, it spans from Eastern North Carolina to South Dakota.

Our first big discovery happened in 1991, three years before the Music Maker Foundation came into being, when our co-founder and executive director, Tim Duffy, finally completed his search for an amazing guitarist, Guitar Gabriel, who played in obscurity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

“So Tim meets Guitar Gabriel, and then Gabe introduces him to this whole community of artists,” our co-founder and managing director, Denise Duffy, remembers. “And it’s like Tim opened this treasure box in East Winston—this drink-house scene with all these incredible artists. And everyone is like, ‘Can you get us a gig? We want to play, but we don’t know where to play or how to find the gigs.’”

The experience taught Tim and Denise a lesson—that if they wanted to provide genuine help to these artists, they could not operate in the way folklorists in academia do.

“Folklorists in academia, doing scholarship work, are recording stuff that may go into an archive,” Jackson says, “and it stops there.”

Denise describes what they learned this way: “The levels of poverty Tim was seeing both among Appalachian musicians and among the blues musicians in the Piedmont cities was so stark. He just was like, ‘How can I make my living off these people as a researcher when they don’t get lunch?’ It felt immoral.”

Tim adds: “There’s nothing unique about poverty in the world, but these guys happen to create some of the greatest musical culture in the world.”

That’s how the Music Maker method became the unique one it is today. The Foundation dedicated itself not only to finding, recording and archiving America’s greatest unheard music, but also to building long-term relationships with the artists who create it.

When artists join our community, they are no longer isolated from other musicians. Their artistic excellence increases because they get recording opportunities and the chance to play prestigious stages and find new audiences. The community experience is transformative: It elevates these art forms and keeps our musical traditions thriving.

“We can’t alleviate everyone’s poverty,” Tim says. “We can’t meet all their financial needs.”

“But what we can do,” Denise adds, “is get someone a quality instrument, to get someone to a quality stage, to get photography, to document their oral history, to document their music, introduce them to other musicians so they can work on their repertoire. We can help with that. And if someone is having a medical issue, we can call in the social worker, and she can try to make sure they’re getting the medical care they need.”

We find these great artists, begin long-running, dedicated relationships with them, and help them in any way we can. And perhaps most importantly, we help them keep their art alive.

“A lot of these artists have kept these archaic traditions, passed on from their family, alive, because they love that,” Tim says. “And if they see that Music Maker’s mission is to help that be passed on into the world, that it will have a further life, that it will be immortal—well, that’s what you can’t pay for.”

Grovetown, Georgia: There’s no question that Fred Thomas, James Brown’s bass player for over 30 years, is extremely talented. He is also so sweet and generous; it was a pleasure to listen to his stories. *Photo by Tim Duffy.*

Montgomery, Alabama: It is always a joy to see Ironing Board Sam. Even though his ability to play music was limited after a stroke in 2015, he is still such a “Super Spirit.” *Photo by Gabi Mendick.*

Birmingham, Alabama: We got a glimpse of the burgeoning blues scene in Birmingham. Sugar Harp, Earl Williams, and Aretta Woodruff played and sang together, bringing each other’s music to life. *Photo by Tim Duffy.*
Birmingham, Alabama: When first entering artist and drummer Joe Minter’s expansive space you might think it is simply a collection of found objects, 30 years in the making. That itself would be a sight to see, but every brush stroke and every object carries a message. Photo by Tim Duffy.

Montgomery, Alabama: Little Lee is a true bluesman. When he “retired” and moved to Montgomery from Chicago in the late ’90s, the first thing he did was put an ad in the paper to form a blues band. Photo by Tim Duffy.

Birmingham, Alabama: We set up and recorded in musician Earl Williams’ barbershop adjacent to his recording studio, which just so happens to be called “Music Makers.” Photo by Tim Duffy.
With the help of the Jazz Foundation of America and MusiCares, a huge tree that was threatening Drink Small’s home was removed and a new septic tank will be installed at Ester Mae Wilbourn’s house. *Brittany Anderson, MSW, rejoined our team as Artist Services Coordinator. *Anthony Daniels of the Dedicated Men of Zion received a major Music Maker grant to restore his studio in Farmville, North Carolina, which was terribly damaged by a fire. *We provided a new HVAC system for funk guitarist Ernie Vincent of New Orleans. *Little Pink Anderson has a fresh pair of specs. *It is extremely difficult to find services in rural areas, but Freeman Vines finally has a functional bathroom in his studio in Fountain, North Carolina. *Many thanks to Catherine Elkins, who donated a car for gospel guitarist Ray Michner and to Daniel Quinn who helped Robert Lee Coleman get a car. *John Bottino donated beautiful guitars that were sent to Little Pink Anderson, Eric Freeman and Jontavious Willis. *Art supplies were provided to musician and painter Elnora Spencer. *We helped Freeman Vines with treatment for his glaucoma and assisted him through surgery. *In March 2020, Music Maker began writing two checks a month to our most impacted artists who lost work during the pandemic. We promised to keep this up for three months, but thanks to amazing support, we were able to continue this assistance through this June.

vue and the Gospel Comforters headed out to the Telluride Blues and Brews Festival in Colorado. ★ The annual Freight Train Blues series was presented virtually and can be viewed on our YouTube and Facebook pages. Aaron Greenhood produced the spectacular concert series featuring Amythyst Kiah, Alexa Rose, The Hamiltones, Johnny Ray Daniels, and Harvey Dalton Arnold. ★ Sacred Soul artists Johnny Ray Daniels and the Dedicated Men of Zion headed into Bible & Tire Recording in Memphis, Tennessee, to record with the Sacred Soul Section for upcoming releases. Label head Bruce Watson and guitarist Will Sexton travelled to Greenville, North Carolina, to meet with Tim Duffy, play Freeman Vines guitars, and spend an afternoon with Johnny Ray Daniels.

We are deeply saddened by the loss of bluesman John Dee Holeman, country-blues musician Sam Frazier Jr., folk singer Patrick Sky, gospel pianist Wilbur Tharpe, blues bassist Nashid Abdul Khaaliq, and Little Willie of The Spiritualaires. Each of these men contributed deeply to their respective musical landscapes.
“Stark and moving . . . elemental and raw, it’s an in-your-face look at race relations from an insider’s point of view.”
—GRANT BRITT, No Depression

“Haunting new book.”
—DAVID BROWNE, Rolling Stone

“[A] singular man... each of his creations seems to embody a dance between life and death... The book is packed with fascinating details about Vines’ idiosyncratic approach to guitar-making, and about his early life in Jim Crow North Carolina, where a legacy of racist violence shaped his view of the world, and continues to exert a deep influence over his guitar designs . . . [accompanied by] remarkable photographs.”
—TED SCHEINMAN, Smithsonian Magazine

“Vines remembers those lost to lynching by representing Black bodies as one-of-a-kind guitars.”
—KELUNDRA SMITH, The Undefeated

BOOK AND CD
Freeman Vines is a 78-year-old African American luthier and artist who has fashioned a series of guitars out of the wood from a lynching tree. This powerful book chronicles the Eastern North Carolina artist/sculptor/guitar maker’s journey through unspoken truths and includes Timothy Duffy’s striking tintype photographs and a narrative by folklorist Zoe van Buren. NPR named the book as one of its top books of 2020 in a whopping six categories.

The musical accompaniment of the same title is a CD featuring 12 songs from deep within Music Maker’s catalog and recent recordings of Freeman Vines’ family members. Robert Christgau, known as the Dean of Rock Critics, put “Hanging Tree Guitars” at No. 1 for 2020 on his annual “Dean's List.”

Softcover book with flaps
(159 pages • 8 x 8.5" • 80 duotone images)
Compact Disc with 12 tracks

Book and CD sold separately or as a package for $35
Order online at musicmaker.org/shop
2021 ALBUM RELEASES

Be the first to get all of our featured releases—including new recordings and never before heard tracks by your favorite Music Maker artists.

For $30 a month or $360 a year you’ll receive six CDs filled with the best music we’ve found in our travels! Also available for digital download.

October Selection: Whose Blues?

December Selection: Train Songs

Alice Vines, Don’t Forget to Pray

Alabama Slim, The Parlor (Cornelius Chapel)

Alexa Rose, Headwaters (Big Legal Mess) available 9/17

Sacred Soul (Bible & Tire Recording Co.) available 9/24

JOIN THE LISTENER’S CIRCLE!

“Slim plays hypnotic boogie like John Lee Hooker, his style raw and steady while his singing is a soul-drenched moan.”

—MOJO

PRAISE FOR HANGING TREE GUITARS
You can help us to tend the roots of American music for generations to come when you make a planned gift to Music Maker. As a tax-exempt organization, Music Maker is an ideal beneficiary for any heavily taxed assets, while you leave less-taxed assets to your loved ones.

YOUR WILL
Include language in your will or trust designating the “Music Maker Foundation (EIN 13-3782018)” as beneficiary of your assets. Contact us so we can coordinate with you to ensure your gift is used in accordance with your wishes when received.

RETIREMENT PLAN ASSETS
Complete a beneficiary designation form provided by your retirement plan custodian. Designate the “Music Maker Foundation (EIN 13-3782018)” as beneficiary. Submit the form to your retirement plan custodian.

IRA ROLLOVER
Individuals age 70½ years old or older can transfer up to $100,000 per year to Music Maker Foundation from an IRA to satisfy the required minimum distribution for the year.

David Johnson, Elba, Alabama. Photo by Axel Kustner.
THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS!