

MUSEUM

EDUCATOR NEWSLETTER



Smithsonian
Affiliate

WELCOME TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM EDUCATOR NEWSLETTER!

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum has an important educational mission, and we are working hard to support our teachers in their learning and student needs, both virtually and on the ground. In this newsletter, you will find details about museum resources, programs, and virtual tours and lessons, along with some interesting historical and cultural stories. If you would also like to be included on **education-specific eBlasts**, please send you name, email address, and school to Erika Barker.

CONTACT

Dr. René Rodgers | Head Curator | rrodgers@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org
Erika Barker | Curatorial Manager | ebarker@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org

WHO WE ARE

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, an [affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution](#), tells the story of the 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings, explores how evolving sound technology shaped their success, and highlights how this rich musical heritage lives on in today's music. Through text and artifacts, multiple theater experiences, and interactive displays – along with a variety of educational programs, music performances, and community events – the exciting story of these recording sessions and their far-reaching influence comes alive. Rotating exhibits from guest curators and other institutions, including the Smithsonian, are featured throughout the year in the Special Exhibits Gallery. The museum also houses a collection of related objects, photographs, ephemera, and digital items that help tell our story and can be used for research purposes.



WHAT'S COMING UP AT *THE MUSEUM?*

COMMUNITY DAY AT THE MUSEUM

The museum is hosting a [Community Day on Saturday, October 29, 10:00am–6:00pm](#) with **free admission all day!** Going along with [other downtown events](#) – Pumpkin Palooza, trick-or-treating, and comic-based activities on 6th Street – we will offer a variety of family-friendly activities 12:00pm–3:00pm, including an Instrument Petting Zoo, square dancing, spooky storytelling, 3D printing with the Bristol Public Library, and craft and coloring takeaways!



SQUARE DANCE

Time to “do-si-do”! Join us for a fun and active night out at the [Birthplace of Country Music’s free square dance on Friday, November 4, 7:00–9:00pm!](#) Hosted in the museum’s Special Exhibits Gallery, the FREE square dance is led by caller Tyler Hughes and accompanied with lively string band music, which is sure to get your feet moving. No partner or experience necessary – just a desire for a great night! All ages welcome!

SPEAKER SERIES

The museum is hosting several interesting speakers for our monthly Speaker Series over the coming months. These events are free and open to the public, and they are offered either hybrid (in-person and virtual) or by Zoom only. You can also check out past Speaker Series [HERE](#). Upcoming Speaker Series programs are listed below – please note the November program will be particularly interesting in light of the Jimmie Rodgers “Blue Yodel” Martin guitar currently on display at the museum!

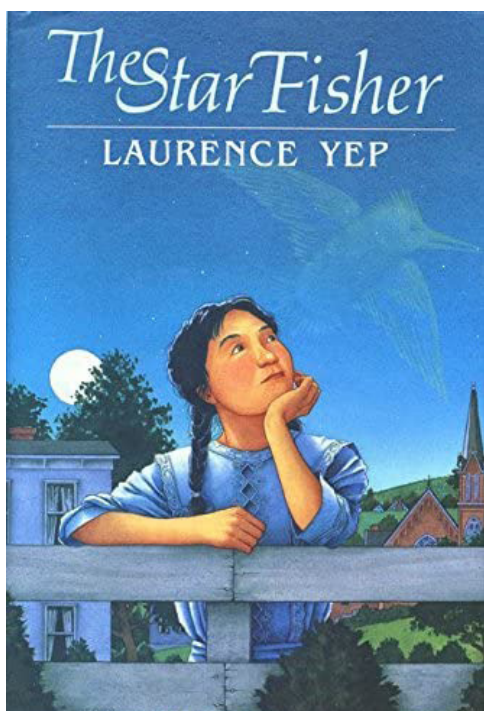
- [Tuesday, November 8, 7:00pm](#) – Jason Ahner, the history and contemporary use of Martin Guitars; Zoom only
- [Tuesday, December 13, 7:00pm](#) – Don Royston, All Aboard Appalachia’s Santa Train; hybrid
- [Tuesday, January 10, 7:00pm](#) – Kristina Gaddy, the banjo’s hidden history, including a book signing; hybrid



DECEMBER RADIO BRISTOL BOOK CLUB – TEACHER READER!

Tune in to [Radio Bristol Book Club](#) on Thursday, December 22, 12:00pm to hear our discussion about [Lawrence Yep's *The Star Fisher*](#) – including our first volunteer teacher reader! In partnership with the Bristol Public Library, we discuss a new book about music, Appalachian stories and culture, or the 1927 Bristol Sessions each month. Books include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, prose, graphic novels, and discographies – and we always try to choose at least one middle-school or young adult book. If you would like to be a teacher reader, please reach out to ebarker@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org.

2023 RADIO BRISTOL BOOK CLUB LIST		
DATE	BOOK	AUTHOR
January 26	<i>Dopesick</i>	Beth Macy
February 23	<i>Never Seen the Moon: The Trials of Edith Maxwell</i>	Sharon Hatfield
March 23	<i>To Live Here You Have to Fight: How Women Led Appalachian Movements for Social Change</i>	Jessica Wilkerson
April 27	<i>The Jack Tales</i>	Richard Chase
May 25	<i>Katherine Jackson French: Kentucky's Forgotten Ballad Hunter</i>	Elizabeth DiSavino
June 22	<i>Afrilachia</i>	Frank X. Walker
July 27	<i>Run Rose Run</i>	Dolly Parton and James Patterson
August 24	<i>Singing Family of the Cumberlands</i>	Jean Ritchie
September 28	<i>The Place Setting: Timeless Tastes of the Mountain South</i>	Fred Sauceman
October 26	<i>The Ballad of Laurel Springs</i>	Janet Beard
November 30	<i>The Coal Tattoo</i>	Silas House
December 28	<i>Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail</i>	Ben Montgomery



MUSEUM

RESOURCES & EXPERIENCES

There are a variety of ways to experience the museum or tap into our resources. These include:

- The museum offers engaging [educational tours for all ages and grade levels](#) that include a docent-led introduction to the museum and its content, a scavenger hunt, and time to interact with and explore the exhibits. These **museum tours** can have a wide focus, or they can be tailored to a specific topic such as music, local history, or technology – we can also work with teachers to learn about other subjects in relation to the museum's content. We also offer **special exhibit tours** as part of your museum experience, or you can book a tour of the special exhibit only. Our staff and volunteers can also provide **virtual tours** focused on museum content. Check out [this video](#) to get a glimpse into a typical museum tour.
- The museum can come to your classroom – in-person or virtually! We offer **learning activities** like the “history of listening,” an exploration of different music recording and playback technologies. Our Banjo Bingo/Name that Instrument game gives students a chance to listen to and identify different types of musical instruments and learn about them. Introductions to artifacts from our collection, lessons on storytelling or ballads, and other options are also available.
- Online video resources include a **virtual tour** of past special exhibit [Real Folk: Passing on Trades & Traditions through the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program](#). Student activity sheets with fun learning activities related to *Real Folk* are also included. We have several short educational **videos about museum content**, which can be found on our [YouTube channel](#). We also have a [video introducing the 1927 Bristol Sessions and why they are important](#), and one about [the contributions of Black musicians and culture to early country music](#).
- You can access and print out [student activity sheets](#) related to 1927 Bristol Sessions artists, technology, musical instruments, and history from our website.
- The museum provides a series of [museum content-based lesson plans and educator resources](#), along with [supplementary videos](#), on a variety of topics and tied into Tennessee and Virginia state standards. The education page on BCM's website will continue to be updated with new resources over the coming months so keep an eye out for these!



FEATURED *HISTORY*

The Bristol Sessions involved few **African American musicians**, despite the fact that many 1920s and 1930s recording sessions were conducted across the South in an attempt to locate and record southern blues and jazz musicians.

The 1927 recording sessions held in Bristol by Ralph Peer of the Victor Talking Machine Company featured only one African American act. **El Watson** recorded two instrumental harmonica pieces, “Pot Licker Blues” and “Narrow Gauge Blues.” Reflecting the race relations of that era, Victor released those two sides on a 78-rpm record in the label’s “race records” series, targeted primarily to a black audience. Interestingly, two similar blues-inspired harmonica pieces performed at the 1927 Bristol Sessions by white musician Henry Whitter were marketed by Victor as “hillbilly records,” which were promoted predominantly to white audiences. Watson’s “Pot Licker Blues” featured guitar accompaniment from Charles Johnson, a white musician who also recorded at the 1927 Bristol Sessions with his brother Paul. That track was one of the very first integrated country music or blues recordings.

After the 1927 Bristol Sessions, [Lesley Riddle](#), an African American musician in Kingsport, Tennessee, traveled in Appalachia and the South with A. P. Carter to collect songs. Riddle memorized the music while Carter learned the lyrics, and together, they collected many of the traditional tunes that The Carter Family later recorded. Riddle’s noted: “I was his tape recorder. He’d take me with him and he’d get someone to sing the whole song. Then I’d get it and learn it to Sara and Maybelle.” Riddle himself also introduced songs to the Carters, such as “The Cannonball,” which became one of their iconic songs. He also spent time with other local African American musicians – such as **Stephen Tarter**, **Harry Gay**, **John Henry Lyons**, and **Brownie McGhee** – learning and sharing music and songs with them.

Despite the segregation of music along color and ethnic lines in the early music industry, the reality is that musicians and audiences from a variety of backgrounds were playing and enjoying music outside of the tunes that were marketed to them, and being influenced by those different styles, traditions, and sounds. Indeed, Mike Seeger, who recorded with Riddle in the 1960s, noted that the story of the Carters and Riddle is a familiar one in country music: “It’s that exchange between black and white musicians that really made American music American.”

To read more on this subject and explore some of the related programs at the museum, check out [this link](#).



FEATURED *RESOURCE*

Smithsonian Spotlights explore different themes through items in the Smithsonian Institution's collections. [Their Autumn Views spotlight](#) includes photographs, paintings and other artworks, historic objects, jewelry, textiles, and more, providing a great visual jumping off point for classroom work that ties into fine arts, English language arts, STEM, social sciences, and more. You can dig deeper into the autumnal topic through this link: [Smithsonian Sparks: Why Do Leaves Change Color in the Fall?](#)



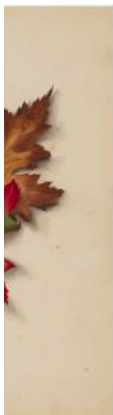
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Autumn Views



Whenever autumn arrives, whether in a [blaze of brilliant leaves](#) or with subtle changes in the life cycles of flora and fauna, the season holds a special beauty. Natural-science illustrations combine art and science in the close observation of nature, and artwork from around the world and across time can capture the mood, color, and light of the fall season.

Smithsonian gardens are full of deciduous trees which turn vibrant colors in the fall. Take a [walking tour of some of the highlights of our autumnal tree collection](#) from home or in our gardens.



Museum
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Smithsonian American Art Museum
Mountains in Fall



Smithsonian American Art Museum
October (cover illustration for Harper's Magazine)



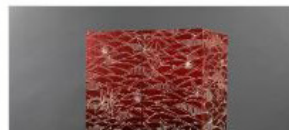
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Autumn Landscape



Smithsonian American Art Museum
Autumn Vase



Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
Autumn Woods



Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
Autumn Landscape, Vermont



Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Frost painting autumn leaves



Cooper Hewitt,