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# Appalachian after-school music programmes as cultural intervention

## ABSTRACT

*In the Southern Appalachians, five after-school programmes of varying sizes – Junior Appalachian Musicians, Young Appalachian Musicians, Georgia Pick and Bow, Hindman Pick and Bow and Appalshop's Passing the Pick and Bow – offer education in regional music traditions to school-aged children. These programmes fulfil a valuable mission, for they often serve students who have no other opportunities to pursue a music education. As many of the names suggest, these programmes provide training in the instruments, practices and repertoire associated with old-time and bluegrass music, and they typically advertise a preservationist mission. This article considers the cultural intervention work of Appalachian after-school music programmes, positioning them as the latest in a series of interventionist projects that have shaped Appalachian music in an effort to preserve it. Through careful consideration of the styles, instruments and repertoire being taught, we address the ways in which after-school programmes 'edit' Appalachian musical heritage for a new generation of participants, and we consider the implications of the programmes' pedagogical practices.*

## KEYWORDS

bluegrass  
old-time  
K–12 education  
Junior Appalachian Musicians  
Young Appalachian Musicians  
Georgia Pick and Bow  
Hindman Pick and Bow

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1. While Marvel and Malphurs provided leadership by writing sections of the manuscript, all students contributed by completing research tasks, participating in discussions and commenting on drafts. Although the other students chose not to be credited with co-authorship or named in acknowledgements, their contributions were invaluable. We hope that this article will both provide insight into the subject at hand and inspire future research collaborations involving young Appalachians.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, after-school music programmes designed to train children in the performance of old-time and bluegrass music have cropped up throughout the Southern Appalachians. The idea of educating Appalachian children in their own musical heritage is, of course, not new. Ever since the Hindman Settlement School was founded in Knott County, KY, in 1902, well-meaning citizens have been seeking to promote and preserve Appalachian culture by means of education. As David Whisnant has so skillfully demonstrated, however, these acts of cultural intervention are never neutral (Whisnant 1983). Whatever their motives, those who intervene inevitably impose their own values, deciding what to preserve and what to erase and establishing standards for 'authenticity'. In this study, we consider the cultural intervention work of programmes that teach Appalachian music to schoolchildren. We seek to understand how these programmes both reflect and create 'Appalachian music' in their communities.

This collaborative study was undertaken by a team of researchers – mostly undergraduate students – at a state university in the Southern Appalachians. Individual contributors brought expertise in Appalachian studies, music history, music education and music performance.<sup>1</sup> We collected information about the programmes and their curricula by combing websites, acquiring published materials and contacting programme directors, some of whom corresponded with researchers via e-mail and some of whom participated in interviews. We then used that information to assemble the first detailed overview of how these programmes work and what they are teaching. Finally, we subjected the programmes to a critical assessment using Whisnant's framework of cultural intervention.

## CULTURAL INTERVENTION AND APPALACHIAN MUSIC

Popular authors, media producers, social reformers, festival organizers and musicians have been constructing the idea of 'Appalachian music' piecemeal over the past century and a half. It began with the representation of Appalachian culture in nineteenth-century popular media, which established both the 'hillbilly' stereotype and the idea of Appalachia as a distinct cultural region (Harkins 2004: 29). Media representations – whether positive or negative, truthful or misleading – continue to have a significant impact on perceptions of Appalachian culture and music, and they can constitute legitimate cultural interventions (Mack 2020: 148). For example, the success of the soundtrack to the 2000 film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* amplified the legacy of Appalachian musician Ralph Stanley and boosted the careers of many musicians who drew from and extended Appalachian traditions (Chaney 2013: 389; Noakes 2008: 194). It also attracted many new practitioners to mountain music, as did the 2003 film *Cold Mountain* (Clawson 2011: 7). These films, therefore, not only portrayed but actually shaped the practices of Appalachian music.

Recorded media have been impacting Appalachian musicians and traditions since 1923, when Ralph Peer invented the marketing category of 'hillbilly records' (Miller 2010: 198). The record industry created new opportunities for mountain musicians, who previously would have pursued work in more profitable fields but could now make a living as performers. However, recording practices also changed the music as artists adapted to the limitations of the technology and adopted new performance elements that they (or the

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recording engineers) believed would improve sales (Cohen 1965: 240). At the same time, the new category of 'hillbilly records' served to define Appalachian music by generally excluding Black performers and limiting White performers to the repertoires, styles and instruments that suited recording executives' notions of rural Southern music (Huber 2013: 22–23). Although Southern Black musicians were also widely recorded, they were largely segregated under the heading of 'race records' and limited to racialized genres – especially the blues (Miller 2010: 221). In recent decades, scholars have sought to re-integrate these artificially divided categories of music-making, both by arguing for the Appalachian identity of genres like the blues (Pearson 2003) and uncovering the histories of Black 'hillbilly' string band (Henry 2020).

Even before recording executives descended on the region, however, outside agents were already effecting cultural change. Foremost among these were the women – Katherine Pettit and May Stone in Kentucky and Olive Dame Campbell in North Carolina – who founded and operated settlement and folk schools, and who counted among their ambitions the preservation of cultural practices that they deemed valuable. In some cases, settlement school workers encouraged local residents to cultivate musical traditions that they held in high esteem, such as ballad-singing (Whisnant 1983: 54). In others, they discouraged practices that they considered unwholesome, such as banjo playing (Whisnant 1983: 93). They also imported folk traditions – for example, English Morris dancing – that had no history in the Appalachians but that they believed would serve their educational and cultural goals (Whisnant 1983: 79). The activities of settlement schools in turn fuelled the ballad hunting craze, which brought collectors and scholars into the mountains in search of ballads from the English tradition (Filene 2000: 16). Like settlement workers, ballad collectors encouraged Appalachians to recall and preserve a specific repertoire on which they placed value, while ignoring and even denigrating non-ballad songs and instrumental music.

Folk festivals continued the cultural intervention work begun in the settlement schools. The festival model was established by Bascom Lamar Lunsford, who first presented an evening of folk music and dance as part of the 1928 Rhododendron Festival in Asheville, NC. In 1930, he founded the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, which has carried on into the present day (Whisnant 1979: 138–39). Lunsford was an Appalachian native, and although he was motivated by a genuine love for local musical traditions and the people who sustained them, that did not prevent him from changing those same traditions. Most notably, his festival was responsible for the integration of clogging steps into square dancing – the result of newly formed teams seeking the top prize in Lunsford's onstage competition (Whisnant 1979: 147). During the same decade, organizers of the White Top Festival in Grayson County, VA, similarly inspired local musicians to revise their practices in hopes of taking home prize money. Participants acquired new repertoires and even changed the ways they played their instruments in order to suit outsiders' notions of authenticity (Whisnant 1983: 191, 231–32). White Top also reinforced colour lines by emphasizing Anglo-Saxon heritage and prohibiting the participation of African Americans (Whisnant 1983: 244).

In the 1950s, folk revivalists began to descend upon the Appalachians in search of traditional musicians whom they could record and from whom they could learn. Yet again, their efforts, which were focused on preservation, would transform the lives and practices of Appalachian musicians. In many cases, individual musicians were urged to pick up long-forgotten instruments and

remember old tunes, after which they were granted opportunities to record and tour. In an extreme example, folklorist Ralph Rinzler played a role in convincing Doc Watson, a blind guitarist from Deep Gap, NC, to abandon rock 'n' roll and return to performing acoustic traditional music as a full-time occupation (Lightfoot 2003: 185). As a result, certain Appalachian styles and repertoires were revived not only by urban enthusiasts, who continue to play banjo and sing Carter Family songs, but among the mountain musicians themselves. Ray Allen, building on the work of Burt Feintuch, has written about the process of 'cultural editing' undertaken by revivalists, who inevitably choose which elements of the tradition to emphasize and which to discard (Allen 2010: 277; Feintuch 1993: 192).

Today, the folk revival is sustained in part by Appalachian institutions. These include festivals, such as the Appalachian String Band Festival in Clifftop, WV, and the Old Fiddlers' Convention in Galax, VA, and residential educational programmes in old-time and bluegrass music such as those offered at Warren Wilson College, Mars Hill College, the John C. Campbell Folk School and the Augusta Heritage Center (Culbertson 1986; Goertzen 2008: 34; Morgan-Ellis 2019: 38). These institutions – like the settlement schools and festivals that came before them – carry on the process of cultural intervention, reinforcing a circumscribed set of values and practices (Blanton et al. 2014: 61). Some are operated by 'tradition bearers' and/or individuals born in the region and others by 'revivalists'/outsiders, although this seems to have limited impact on the form of the institutions. Indeed, whether or not the term 'revivalist' remains useful is a matter of some debate, with Ruchala advocating for the concept of 'postrevival' (2011: 43) and Decosimo finding that the old-time scenes he investigates 'aren't accurately described by the revival or postrevival models' (2018: 12). Whether or not it is appropriate to understand after-school programmes as 'revivalist' institutions, there is no question that they edit tradition for the purpose of transmission and consumption.

As this brief survey has demonstrated, the history of cultural interventions into Appalachian music is long and complicated. The motivations for intervention have included aesthetic preference, an inclination to preserve traditional forms, the desire for financial gain and virulent racism. Every time an agent has sought to preserve, promote or teach Appalachian music, however, they have left their mark on the lives and activities of real Appalachians. This process continues today and is perhaps best exemplified by the after-school music programmes that flourish throughout the Southern Appalachians.

## THE PROGRAMMES

In 2000, Helen White, an elementary school guidance counsellor in North Carolina, came to the disheartening realization that musical traditions in the Appalachians were weakening and even disappearing as younger generations turned to other styles of music-making (Morris 2021). In founding an after-school programme called Junior Appalachian Musicians, or JAM, White had two aims: to help children gain an appreciation for their heritage, and to reduce 'the general cultural isolation of students' ('Helen White' 2019: n.pag.). Today, this programme is based in Grayson County, VA, and has spread to locations in North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee. Instructing students from fourth to eighth grade, JAM teaches a wide range of Appalachian instruments – fiddle, banjo, guitar, mandolin, bass and dulcimer – in addition to voice and ukulele for younger students.

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The programme's mission is to help children in the communities keep their roots alive by learning to play music in old-time and bluegrass styles (Junior Appalachian Musicians 2021).

Brett Morris, the director of JAM, defines Appalachian music as 'music played and passed along an oral tradition, stemming from the roots of America's first settlers (including African slaves)' (Morris 2021: n.pag.). The JAM programme seeks to teach music in a way that is as close as possible to these roots, which means that although some tablature is used, students most often learn by ear – the traditional method of instruction for Appalachian music (Morgan-Ellis 2019: 33). Classes generally last for 45 minutes to one hour. Morris explains that students have communal gatherings before being split into groups that switch off for enrichment activities and lessons. When they reach a high enough level of proficiency on their instruments, the students can join the instructors to play together as a string band (Morris 2021).

According to Morris, JAM has effected a host of positive outcomes in the various communities it serves. She states proudly that JAM has produced many programme graduates who have 'gone on to pursue musical careers [...] [become] music teachers themselves, overcome issues stemming from disabilities, or have used music as a gateway to a better and more positive life' (Morris 2021: n.pag.). Quite apart from keeping the fascinating traditions of Appalachian music alive in the next generation of musicians, the programme has taught its students much about teamwork and Appalachian history and has instilled in them a newfound appreciation for their cultural heritage and for music in general.

An affiliate of the JAM programme, Young Appalachian Musicians, or YAM, is an after-school folk music programme founded in 2008 that is active in twelve different schools across Pickens County, SC. Its mission is to preserve the heritage of mountain folk music, instructing students from third grade to eighth grade in a variety of acoustic instruments including mandolin, fiddle, banjo and guitar (Young Appalachian Musicians 2021). Like JAM and many other Appalachian music programmes, YAM places a strong emphasis upon learning by ear.

Pauline Blackston is the assistant director and one of the founders of the YAM programme. Although she is not a musician herself, she explains the inspiration behind the mission: 'I taught at a small elementary school and wanted our kids to learn about our music heritage, so my husband and I started this after-school program with our friends who are great musicians' (Blackston 2021: n.pag.). The founders' efforts to impress their musical traditions upon the children of South Carolina have not been in vain; YAM has continued to grow steadily since its inception in 2008. According to Blackston, the enrolment has grown from 32 students in 2008 to over 300 in 2019. When asked how long students normally stay in the programme, Blackston explained that, although the average student remains for between two and three years, many stay for the full duration of six years. Furthermore, more advanced students are encouraged to stay on as "'young" music instructors' to help pass along their knowledge to the next generation of YAM students (Blackston 2021).

When asked about the effect that YAM has had on local music-making, Blackston reports, '[w]e believe that we're accomplishing our mission and having an effect by seeing Appalachian music played throughout the county and beyond in jam sessions, at events, making music recordings, even on *America's Got Talent* and *American Idol*' (Blackston 2021: n.pag.). This programme that started fifteen years ago with only 32 students has become

2. One of the co-authors, Morgan-Ellis, currently teaches with GPB and serves on the Board of Directors. To maintain a degree of impartiality, she refrained from researching or writing about the programme.

increasingly important in Pickens County and the surrounding area, instilling in its students a true love for the music that is taught.

Georgia Pick and Bow (GPB)<sup>2</sup> was launched in Lumpkin County, GA, in 2007 with the aim to ‘preserve and promote the playing and singing of the traditional old-time and bluegrass music of our region of Appalachia by offering affordable instruction from highly qualified teachers to students in 4th grade through 12th grade’ (Georgia Pick and Bow 2021: n.pag.). The programme directors are adamant that all students who want to study Appalachian music have the opportunity to do so, even if they are not able to pay for the classes. Taking a traditional approach to Appalachian music that is similar to both JAM’s and YAM’s, GPB concentrates on learning by ear and teaching students how to play in groups rather than as soloists. Lessons are offered in guitar, banjo, fiddle, mandolin, bass and (more recently) ukulele, which is easier for younger students to learn (Whitley 2021).

Ann Whitley, former curriculum director for GPB, is able to detail many successes of the programme. She states that ‘some of our young people have formed bands with other young musicians, and we’ve had five or six become teachers for our program when they were older’ (Whitley 2021: n.pag.). One of these success stories is Sarah Adams, a student from the first years of the programme who discovered a true love for Appalachian music through GPB. Although Adams left Lumpkin County to earn a degree from Yale College, she returned after graduation to take on a leadership role in the programme that meant so much to her (Adams 2021b).

GPB has been highly influential in Lumpkin County and the surrounding areas and continued to flourish on Zoom for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. In reference to the impact the programme has had on the community, Whitley says, ‘we consider that we are planting seeds that may not take root until a much later age in some of the kids who “try it out” with us’ (Whitley 2021: n.pag.). Not all of the students will stick with the instruments they learn in the programme, but the hope is that they will all gain appreciation for their cultural heritage. And in certain cases, like that of Adams, they may even discover a passion for Appalachian music and return to help pass that knowledge along to the next generation of young musicians.

Hindman Pick and Bow was founded in 2003 in Letcher County, KY. It partnered with Hindman Settlement School in 2016 to expand into Knott County and, in 2018, Floyd County. According to the school’s website, the mission of Hindman Pick and Bow is ‘to carry on the tradition of passing on the talent and tunes of our Appalachian ancestors to younger generations’ (Hindman Settlement School 2021: n.pag.). The programme teaches students from fourth grade to twelfth grade, conducting lessons that are approximately an hour and a half long. Similar to the other programmes discussed, Hindman Pick and Bow offers lessons in guitar, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, mountain dulcimer and ukulele, largely focusing these lessons on learning by ear.

Sarah Kate Morgan, the folk arts director of Hindman Pick and Bow, explains the reasoning behind the programme’s mission to instruct young people in the Appalachian music tradition, clarifying that they do not try to ‘preserve old music for the sake of old music but [...] [to] really instil a sense of ownership’ (Morgan 2021: n.pag.). Hindman Pick and Bow strives to show students that traditional Appalachian music does not have to belong to their grandparents, but can be theirs too due to the rich underlying culture from whence it comes. Morgan explains that the students take lessons privately and with small groups, but that there is always time

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allotted for the entire group to jam and to sing their traditional closing song, 'The Goodnight Song'. The programme has a very high retention rate, largely due to the staff's encouragement of each student, intentionality reaching out to the parents and consistency offering help and resources (Morgan 2021).

When asked for specific stories of students from the programme, Sarah Kate Morgan fondly recalls a student who had a great passion for playing clawhammer banjo but did not own the instrument himself. When a local community member offered to donate a number of high-end banjos to the school, Hindman Pick and Bow was able to present the student with his very own banjo so that he could further develop his skill. According to Morgan, the goal of Hindman Pick and Bow is 'to reach people and make their lives better and develop a rich, meaningful Appalachian culture' (2021: n.pag.). Stories like this portray a programme that truly cares about its community and strives to preserve Appalachian culture in a way that is both instructive and relational.

One other after-school Appalachian music programme that must be mentioned is Appalshop's Passing the Pick and Bow, which helped to launch Hindman Pick and Bow in 2003. Appalshop was founded in 1969 in Eastern Kentucky. The programme exists to keep Appalachian traditions alive, to celebrate diversity, to help solve problems in the community related to poverty and injustice and to provide a forum for discussion of all of these things (Appalshop 2021). Teaching students aged 8 and up, with certain exceptions for younger students, Appalshop's classes usually last for two hours and rotate meeting locations between five different Letcher County schools. The programme offers lessons in banjo, mandolin, guitar and fiddle, in both group and one-on-one settings (Appalshop 2021). Appalshop is run out of WMMT, the Mountain Community Radio station in Whitesburg, KY, that was founded in 1985 (WMMT 88.7 Mountain Community Radio 2020). At the time this study was undertaken, Appalshop has been forced to take a break from its regular music classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## THE CURRICULUM

This section will consider the styles, instruments and repertoires taught in the programmes under consideration. We will emphasize the origins and histories of each, in addition to commenting on their place in the tradition of Appalachian music-making.

### Styles

As noted above, all of the programmes under consideration teach students how to play old-time and/or bluegrass music. The term 'old-time' is used to refer to playing styles and repertoires that typically date to the 1920s and earlier (Decosimo 2018: 11–12). Old-time string band music is characterized by a performance style in which roles (melody vs. harmony/rhythm) are clearly defined and all melody instruments play continuously (Goertzen 2003: 139). Old-time music flourishes primarily as a participatory practice; although there are professional old-time musicians, many rely on teaching for a substantial portion of their income. However, the modern old-time jam, in which large numbers of musicians come together by appointment to play a shared body of tunes, has a history of only a half-century or so. Traditional Appalachian musicians were more likely to play alone or in groups of two or three, and several

of the instruments popular today – guitar and mandolin in particular – were only introduced in the late nineteenth century.

Bluegrass is a more professionalized category. Its development culminated in the 1940s when Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys rose to fame with weekly performances on the Grand Ole Opry radio programme in Nashville, TN. Although Monroe's band performed a mostly traditional repertoire, they adopted a new approach characterized by breakneck tempos and virtuosic solos, creating what folklorist Alan Lomax called 'folk music in overdrive' (Cantwell 1984: 61). In addition, Monroe's banjo player Earl Scruggs popularized a style of picking that was quite different from the older clawhammer technique prevalent in the Appalachians. 'Scruggs style' would become typical of bluegrass banjo players (Cantwell 1984: 100–01). As the bluegrass style gained popularity, amateur musicians claimed bluegrass as a participatory category similar to old-time, but with its own practices (Cantwell 1984: 147; Gardner 2004: 159). In bluegrass, almost every instrument can serve in both a melodic and accompanimental role, and individual musicians alternate between the two based on whether they are taking a 'break' (solo) or backing up another player.

The categories of old-time and bluegrass are today firmly entrenched in revivalist culture, although enculturated Appalachian musicians – as well as those deeply immersed in the scenes – are less likely to perceive or affirm stylistic differences (Decosimo 2018: 142–43n12). The categories are reinforced by festivals, music camps and weekly jams; indeed, the city where the authors reside hosts a bluegrass jam on the town square every Saturday and a three-day festival dedicated to old-time and bluegrass each April, while local adherents to both styles gather for regular jam sessions in private and public spaces. However, the categories and their associated practices are, in fact, relatively recent. To borrow Eric Hobsbawm's term, old-time and bluegrass are 'invented traditions', which Hobsbawm defines as 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (1983: 1). The practices of old-time and bluegrass are indeed highly ritualized, reinforced through repetition and expressly connected with a venerated past. Although the rules that govern participation are informal, they are widely understood and frequently described in print (e.g. Bing 2020). Students in Appalachian after-school programmes do not only learn how to make music – they also gain entrance into these traditions. The instruments taught in these programmes are mostly common to both old-time and bluegrass, although there are a few significant exceptions.

### ***Instruments***

The fiddle has long been a ubiquitous instrument in Appalachian music-making. It developed from similar Middle Eastern instruments in the lute family, but the first obvious predecessor of the modern fiddle, the violin played with a horsehair bow, came from Italy in the sixteenth century. The fiddle entered America with European immigrants in the seventeenth century and immediately gained traction, especially in the South (Beisswenger 2011: xix–xx).

The fiddle was favoured for many different types of Appalachian music-making and could be heard at dances, accompanying ballads, in medicine

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shows and, later, as a standard element of bluegrass. It was the instrument played most frequently by enslaved African Americans, who were often tasked with accompanying dances by their White enslavers (Winans 2018: 196). The fiddle was also liberally employed in blackface minstrelsy (Goertzen 2008: 7). However, the most important platforms for the fiddle's rise to prominence were the fiddling conventions of the early twentieth century, such as the Georgia Old-Time Fiddler's Convention in Atlanta, GA (Goertzen 2008: 9). The music the fiddle produced was extremely popular in these settings because it was considered to be the music of the working class: raw, rowdy and authentic (Campbell 2004: 127). Although these stereotypes do not necessarily apply anymore, the fiddle is still one of the most commonly taught instruments in Appalachian after-school music programmes.

The banjo, recognized today as one of the most characteristically Appalachian instruments, has a long history. Descended from the family of African spike lutes, it has undergone countless changes over the years (Conway 1995: 27–28). The earliest predecessor of the current banjo was the gourd banjo, which was developed in the Caribbean and, through the slave trade, made its way from there to the United States. Many of these banjo predecessors, in the style of spike lutes, were fretless and made with a stick that passed through the entire body of the instrument (Pestcoe 2018: 23–24). These early relatives of the banjo were also likely the source for classic banjo picking patterns, although they were mainly used for rhythm instead of melody.

Banjo types and styles are particularly important when considering the differences between bluegrass and old-time music. Bluegrass banjos have a metal tone ring that runs all the way around the back, capturing the sound and projecting it outward, which results in a brighter, more piercing and more resonant sound. While old-time players use banjos of all types, revivalists typically favour those with open backs, often placing a towel in the opening to produce a muted and 'plunky' sound (Jones-Bamman 2017: 35–37; Decosimo 2018: 99). Furthermore, bluegrass banjo players often use Scruggs-style picking (which incorporates the use of metal fingerpicks) and move their left hands further up the neck of the instrument, while old-time banjo players are likely to use the clawhammer technique (although picking styles are not uncommon) and largely keep their left hands in the same place on the neck. Appalachian after-school music programmes teach a mix of clawhammer and bluegrass techniques.

The acoustic guitar is an instrument whose core characteristics, such as its body shape and six strings, have remained largely unchanged since the seventeenth century. It arrived in America in the eighteenth century, at which point the gut strings were replaced by steel strings, giving the instrument more volume. Upon becoming available by mail order in the early twentieth century, guitars were widely adopted by rural as well as urban musicians (Thomas 2004: 89–90).

The most common style of guitar-playing in Appalachian music involved strummed chords and walking bass lines. This provided a firm rhythmic basis beneath the solo instruments, and the incorporation of bass notes helped to support ensembles that lacked an actual bass. Another approach to guitar-playing was Maybelle Carter's 'Carter Scratch' technique, which incorporated finger and thumb picking to play melody lines as well as accompaniment (Lightfoot 2003: 180). However, the guitar's main function was not as a melody instrument but as a rhythm and accompaniment instrument – and this is how it has largely stayed in contemporary old-time performances. Guitar players

who championed this style included the blind guitarist Riley Puckett, who was a member of the band Gid Tanner and his Skillet Lickers (Cohen 1965: 239). Today, guitar is one of the most popular instruments taught in Appalachian after-school music programmes and often provides the main rhythmic backbone of any old-time music ensemble.

The mandolin, a small acoustic instrument with a distinctive sound produced by four doubled sets of strings, is a member of the lute family. The *mandora*, invented in the sixteenth century, was the earliest predecessor to the contemporary mandolin. This was followed by the Neapolitan mandolin, invented in Italy in the nineteenth century. These instruments made their way to America in the hands of European immigrants, receiving nicknames such as ‘bowlback mandolin’ and ‘taterbug mandolin’ along the way (Fagan 2011: 19).

The version of this instrument that we know today – and that is so often used in Appalachian music – is the archtop mandolin, which started to become popular in the 1910s and 1920s with the help of Orville Gibson and Lloyd Loar. Modifications to the mandolin helped to make it louder than previous versions had been. Bill Monroe, himself a mandolin player, was responsible for the second popularization of the mandolin in the twentieth century, during which time it was most often used for bluegrass music. Today, the mandolin is usually included in Appalachian music performances as a rhythmic instrument (Fagan 2011: 21). Mandolin lessons are offered in all of the Appalachian after-school music programmes under discussion: JAM, YAM, GPB, Hindman Pick and Bow and Appalshop.

The mountain dulcimer comes from the fretted zither family. It is a descendant of the German zither or scheitholt, which may date back to medieval times and is itself derived from Middle Eastern instruments. When the scheitholt was brought to America, it spread quickly throughout the Appalachian region and took on a new identity as the mountain dulcimer, most likely sometime between the late 1700s and early 1800s. Those who crafted these instruments – like J. Edward Thomas, who is considered to be the father of the mountain dulcimer in its modern form – used the wood that was readily available, and many of the earliest dulcimers had three strings that were often made from screen door wires. The instruments varied in shape depending on what region they were from and who built them. Designs favoured functionality, not beauty (Shepherd et al. 2003: 405; Long 1995: 76).

The Appalachian dulcimer was often used to accompany English ballads. However, with the advent of the radio and other types of music such as jazz, the mountain dulcimer was rendered rather obsolete. It was only during the Folk Revival period that the mountain dulcimer rose to prominence once more, largely popularized by Jean Ritchie (Hayes 2008: 70). Today, many other types of music are played on the mountain dulcimer, but old-time music is still by far the most common (Gibson 2016). Certain Appalachian after-school music programmes, such as JAM and Hindman Pick and Bow, still keep up the task of teaching the dulcimer to the next generation.

The ukulele was first popularized by Portuguese agricultural workers in Honolulu in 1879. At first used almost exclusively for Hawaiian dance music, the ukulele worked its way into old-time music by way of medicine shows, minstrel performances and Black string bands. The ukulele was later merged with the banjo to create a new instrument, the banjo uke, which was cheaper and of a more manageable size than the banjo but which could be played using many of the same techniques and strumming patterns (Rev and Porter 2004). Today, the ukulele, while not an integral part of Appalachian music, is

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often used to supplement it. In the case of contemporary after-school music programmes like Hindman Pick and Bow and JAM, ukulele lessons are generally offered for younger students as an easier alternative to guitar or banjo.

The bass, while far from being a uniquely Appalachian instrument, is often used for filling out the sound of an old-time ensemble with a rich low end. Upright bass is the most commonly played in this type of music. However, since this instrument is so large and heavy, many alternatives have been employed over the years to achieve the low sounds, including the jug (in jug band music), the washtub bass (which has a metal wash tub or bucket for the body and is extremely simple yet effective) and the cello (Adams 2021a). Appalachian after-school programmes usually do not allow students to study bass as their primary instrument because of its relative simplicity, although supplemental instruction (e.g. at the GPB summer camp) is sometimes available.

### **Songs and tunes**

For the purposes of this study, 'songs' have words and are sung, while 'tunes' are played on instruments. Within the Appalachian repertoire, there is a great deal of overlap between these categories: many 'songs' are also 'tunes' and can be performed with or without words. In the context of after-school programmes, however, the two play different roles. Songs are sung collectively by students, either for the purpose of community building or becoming familiar with the repertoire (students often sing 'songs' before learning the corresponding 'tunes'), while tunes serve as vehicles for mastering instrumental skills (Whitley 2021). In this section, we will consider the origins of these songs and tunes and survey their history in the Appalachians.

Two of the programmes under consideration – JAM and GPB – publish official songbooks for students to use. The *JAM Songbook*, which was published by Pete Wernick and Liam Purcell in 2019, is available for purchase. GPB, on the other hand, maintains an informal songbook, the contents of which are revised on a yearly basis. Printed copies are provided to students in class, while images of each page can be accessed on the GPB website (Georgia Pick and Bow 2021). The *JAM Songbook* contains 38 songs, while the 2020–21 version of the GPB songbook contains 23 songs (Wernick and Purcell 2019). Surprisingly, the two books share only fourteen songs, suggesting that there is no well-defined canon of songs for use in programmes such as these.

GPB is the only programme to publish a tune list on their website, although the list is not complete, since individual instructors often introduce their own repertoires. Other programmes supplied us with partial lists or named a few representative tunes that are taught, but likewise indicated that the choice of tunes is often guided by the instructor. However, we assembled a list of all known tunes being taught, many of which are also songs and appear in one or other of the songbooks.

The songs can be broken down into categories based on how, when and why they were written. The first category contains vernacular Appalachian songs that have flourished in the oral tradition. These are the songs with the longest history within the region, and in most cases neither an originating date nor an author is known. Because these songs were passed down orally from generation to generation, they exist in many different variations. For example, versions of 'Jenny Jenkins', which is sung by GPB students, have been documented across the United States. John and Alan Lomax collected a version from a couple they 'found courting one evening on the front porch of their

Blue Ridge Mountain cabin' that is similar to the GPB version, but has significant differences in melody and text (Lomax and Lomax 1947: 36). 'Say Darlin' Say', also in the GPB songbook, belongs to a complex of songs with related texts and tunes. First recorded by Ernest Stoneman with the Sweet Brothers in 1928, it is common in the Appalachians (Melzer 2009: 65). Even better known is the murder ballad 'Tom Dooley', used by JAM, which became a major hit for the Kingston Trio in 1958 but was first recorded by the Tennessee duo of Gilliam Banmon Grayson and Henry Whitter for Ralph Peer in 1929 (Curry 1998).

A second category includes work songs, most of which have African American origins. These are songs that were developed as a way for workers, most often along a railroad, to coordinate labour and keep up their spirits. Some of these songs were original compositions while others were adapted from pre-existing songs. For example, 'Take This Hammer' is one of several African American work songs that was born out of the even more popular work song 'John Henry'. In the early decades of the twentieth century, versions were collected by folklorists and recorded by Appalachian musicians (Scarborough 1925: 220; Cohen 2000: 571). Other examples include 'Wabash Cannonball', which was first recorded by Hugo Cross of Tennessee in 1929, and 'She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain', which was adapted by railroad workers from the Negro Spiritual 'When the Chariot Comes' (Cohen 2000: 377; Sandburg 1927: 372). All three of these selections can be found in the *JAM Songbook*.

Related to this is the category containing other songs from the African American tradition. Some, like 'Li'l Liza Jane', have been filtered through the commercial entertainment industry. Although it originated in slave culture, 'Li'l Liza Jane' was used on the minstrel stage. The version most familiar today was published as sheet music in 1916, with an attribution to Ada de Lachau. Likewise, versions of 'Shortenin' Bread' – some of which betray the influence of the minstrel stage – have been collected from both White and Black sources (Wade 2012: 94–99). The ubiquitous song and tune 'Bile Them Cabbage Down' seems to have dual origins: the words have been collected from African American sources, but the tune might derive from the English country dance 'Smiling Polly' (Talley 1922). All three of these are sung by GPB and JAM students, although without the blackface dialect of the published originals.

A fourth category of songs contains those composed by Appalachian musicians. Unlike the songs that fall under the vernacular category, these have a known creator and definitive history. Fiddlin' John Carson, for example, was a renowned Southern Appalachian recording artist who was known both for his interpretations of old vernacular Appalachian songs and work songs, such as 'She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain', and for writing his own originals, such as 'There Ain't No Bugs on Me', which is sung by GPB students (Cobb 1999: 80). Another example is 'I Ain't Gonna Work Tomorrow', written by A. P. Carter and first recorded by the Carter Family in 1928 (Russell and Pinson 2004: 187). 'Lazy John' provides us with a less straightforward example. The version sung by GPB students was created by Kentucky fiddler and banjo player Clyde Davenport. Davenport, however, adapted his song from a 1947 Johnnie Lee Wills recording that he heard on the radio (Titon 2021). While Davenport's version is different enough to be considered a distinct song, this lineage demonstrates the complexity of determining 'authorship' in an oral tradition.

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There are also songs that did not originate in the Appalachians, but that have a long history in the mountains. Some of these are religious songs, such as 'Amazing Grace', which pairs a text by English curate John Newton with an unattributed American hymn tune, and 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken', whose text and music come from England (Ada R. Habershon) and California (Charles H. Gabriel), respectively. Some are 'hillbilly' songs from the deep South, such as Jimmie Tarlton and Thomas Darby's 'Columbus Stockade Blues', written and recorded in 1927, and 'You Are My Sunshine', the authorship of which is disputed. And others, such as 'Bury Me Beneath the Willow' and 'Mama Don't Allow', are vernacular songs that did not originate in the Appalachians (Belden 1940: 482). All of these songs proved useful or appealing to Appalachian musicians, and they spread through the region either in hymnals or on 'hillbilly' records and radio programmes, eventually being absorbed into the repertoire.

A related but more uncomfortable category of Appalachian songs contains those directly from the minstrel stage. Blackface minstrelsy flourished for most of the nineteenth century. In this popular form of entertainment, performers would darken their skin with burnt cork and assume stereotyped African American personas. Many songs now embedded in the Appalachian repertoire were written for or popularized by blackface minstrels. 'The Yellow Rose of Texas', for example, while unattributed in the GPB songbook, was first published in 1853 by Edwin Pearce Christy, the founder of Christy's Minstrels. The original lyrics, written in blackface dialect, express romantic yearning for a light-skinned African American girl. GPB students sing a version recorded by Gene Autry in the 1930s, which lacks any overt references to race. 'The Yellow Rose of Texas' also entered the tune repertoire and was collected from several prominent Appalachian fiddlers during the twentieth century. Nearly the same story can be told about 'Buffalo Gals', which was written and published by the blackface minstrel John Hodges in 1844. 'Angeline the Baker', which is sung and played by students in both the JAM and GPB programmes, is derived from the song 'Angelina Baker', composed for the Christy Minstrels by Stephen Foster in 1850. Once again, the 'folk' version – in addition to transforming the melody and text – has eliminated the dialect and racial reference of the original. The impossibility of escaping the legacy of minstrelsy is demonstrated by the fact that even 'Jingle Bells', which is included in the *JAM Songbook*, was actually premiered on the minstrel stage (Hamill 2017: 376).

More than half of the tunes known to be taught in the programmes under consideration also appear in the songbooks. This reflects the legacy of Appalachian music-making, in which the categories of 'song' and 'tune' are fluid. At the same time, this dual usage is a valuable pedagogical tool, since students learn to sing melodies before learning to play them. Students play tunes from all six of the categories described above, including many that have already been mentioned. Additional tunes further attest to the diverse influences on the Appalachian repertoire. 'Red Wing', for example, began life in 1907 as a popular song, written and published by New Yorker Kerry Mills. Although the lyrics by Thurland Chattaway describe a heartbroken 'Indian maid', Mills actually borrowed the melody from German composer Robert Schumann. 'Sandy Boys' and 'Tombigbee Waltz' both appear to have minstrel origins. And 'St. Anne's Reel' originated in Canada, finding its way into the Appalachians by way of the American Midwest only in the second half of the twentieth century (Kuntz 2012).

## AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AS CULTURAL INTERVENTION

As the preceding overviews have indicated, the process of cultural transformation in the Appalachians has been ongoing for centuries. It can only be expected that the traditions under consideration will continue to change and that educational programmes will contribute to that change. Here, we consider the ways in which these programmes actively shape current and future musical practices in their communities.

It is noteworthy that the programmes under consideration do not all preserve the same practices. For example, GPB offers classes in bluegrass banjo, while Hindman teaches clawhammer style. JAM teaches both styles. Likewise, only JAM and Hindman include the mountain dulcimer in their programmes. We also found variation among the programmes in terms of their openness to newer, perhaps less traditional music. Hindman students, for example, are learning a Dolly Parton song at the time of this writing, illustrating the programme's inclusive definition of 'Appalachian music'. Instructors also accept requests from students, including mainstream popular songs. This serves a pedagogical purpose by keeping the students interested, but also reflects the philosophy of folk arts director Sarah Kate Morgan, who was quick to compare the Hindman programme to the Girls Rock programme in nearby Letcher county: 'That's just as much Appalachian music as fiddle and banjo' (Morgan 2021: n.pag.). For her, preserving traditional music is secondary to serving Appalachian children and families. Similar sentiments were expressed by JAM founder Helen White and many of the early settlement school founders.

We find it interesting that none of the programmes include ballads in their curriculum. Historically speaking, ballads were the first artefacts of Appalachian music to attract the attention of people outside of the region, and the first to be targeted for preservation. It seems somewhat remarkable, therefore, that none of these programmes seek to sustain the ballad-singing tradition. It is additionally interesting that none of the programmes explicitly teach Appalachian singing styles, although they are likely modelled by the instructors. Indeed, the transmission of style – as opposed to repertoire – seems to be secondary across programmes. On the one hand, this makes sense, given the age of the students and limitations of the class schedule; teaching pitches, rhythms and basic technique is clearly a priority. On the other, style is often at the heart of Appalachian musical identity and often what is most valued about historical Appalachian musicians. Also missing are some of the peripheral instruments popular in the 'hillbilly' recording era: cello, autoharp, accordion, harmonica, mouth harp, jug, washtub bass and percussion such as washboard, spoons and bones. Many of these have receded from the old-time tradition in general as revivalists focus on what might be perceived as the more 'serious' repertoire and skills associated with fiddle and banjo. Finally, it does not seem that students are encouraged or guided in writing their own tunes and songs – at least as part of the official curriculum. This seems to be a missed opportunity in the mission to grant children ownership of the string band tradition.

These programmes introduce some significant changes in how the music is taught and used. Although all of the programmes employ face-to-face transmission techniques that minimize or eliminate the role of notation, these students are hardly learning in the 'traditional' way. Formal education in Appalachian traditional music only dates to the settlement schools and did not become widespread until the late twentieth century. For most of this music's history, practitioners entered the traditional by informal means.

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Typically, the child of a musician would hear and appreciate the music, desire to play and then teach themselves on a homemade or borrowed instrument (often surreptitiously removed from a hiding place while the parent was out of the house). Once the child had demonstrated skill, they might have received some encouragement and be given the opportunity to learn tunes from other musicians (Wolfe 1997: 50). However, it was not likely that a player would slow down or break apart a tune for pedagogical purposes; instead, the aspiring musician would memorize a tune played at speed and do their best to master it independently (Morgan-Ellis 2019: 34). In contemporary formal settings, tunes are carefully chosen with an eye to difficulty, demonstrated at slow speeds and dissected into phrases, which are repeated many times until every student is able to imitate the teacher (Blanton et al. 2014: 63–64). Access is therefore not limited to only the most driven and gifted.

Similarly, the purposes for making music have changed. Fiddle and banjo players of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would almost certainly have played for dances, but this does not seem to be a significant objective for students in these programmes. Instead, they prepare stage performances for attentive audiences – a testament to changing cultural values, which uphold polish and professionalism as desirable traits. Students also participate in large-scale communal jams, which are common in the old-time revivalist cohort but have a short history in traditional music-making. The focus, therefore, is on preparing students to become part a musical community that is in many cases shaped by revivalist values or, in rare cases, to pursue careers as professional performers. After-school programmes also take on the mission of changing the image of string band music, seeking to erase ‘hillbilly’ stereotypes while persuading children that this music belongs to them and has a place in modern society.

This study has engaged heavily with historical narratives, but after-school music programmes are limited in their capacity to provide students with historical context for what they are learning. Class time is, for good reason, devoted primarily to developing musical skills, and not all instructors are equally well-equipped to interject lessons in history. In 2020 and 2021, Sarah Adams sought to rectify this shortcoming in the GPB curriculum. Funded by a grant from the Jon Bekoff Foundation, she created a historical curriculum for GPB students consisting of age-appropriate online essays, historical blurbs for the songbook and a history class for summer camp. However, she faced the same difficulties already addressed above, including diversity in student ages and limited class time. Furthermore, the history itself – which cannot be explained without discussions of enslavement and minstrelsy – poses challenges for the music teacher.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

These programmes provide a valuable service in the counties where they are located, many of which have limited music offerings in the public schools. In particular, schools in rural counties are not likely to offer string instrument education. After-school programmes therefore grant unique access to instruments like the violin and guitar, which, once mastered, can serve as gateways into a wide variety of musical styles. Encouraging students to develop their listening skills through attentive observation and imitation is also objectively valuable, whatever repertoire or style is being modelled (Woody 2012: 83). It is important to note that, quite apart from their interventionist role, the

programmes under consideration often provide access to musical education that would otherwise be denied.

At the same time, these programmes cannot help but shape ideas about 'Appalachian music'. The curricula examined above indicate that Appalachian music – 'the music of our region of the mountains', to quote from the introductory video on the GPB website (Georgia Pick and Bow 2021: n.pag.) – consists of songs and fiddle tunes performed on acoustic stringed instruments in the old-time and bluegrass styles. While these traditions are indeed of great significance to the region, they are not the only musics of Appalachia, either in the past or in the present. Sophia Enriquez, for example, has documented a long history of Latin American musical styles in the Appalachians, beginning around 1910 with Mexican immigration into mining and sharecropping communities and culminating in the recent emergence of 'Latingrass' (Enriquez 2021: 50, 2020: 64). Her research establishes that the musical traditions of Latin American immigrants are just as 'Appalachian' as those of the Scotch-Irish, who have long been centred in portrayals of Appalachian identity (Thompson 2006: 68). Any criticism that these traditions have their origins outside of the Appalachians can be immediately negated; as this study has emphasized, almost all elements of old-time and bluegrass – especially instruments and tunes, but also sometimes playing styles – originated outside of the region. Similarly, educational programmes tend to locate 'Appalachian music' in the past, perhaps inadvertently contributing to the erasure of more recent genres. In his discussion of the distinctive hip hop scene that has emerged in eastern Kentucky, for example, Jordan Laney criticizes 'oppressive notions of authenticity with regard to regional music' (2017: 278). While we are not suggesting that after-school programmes can or should offer training in all Appalachian musical styles, it is important to acknowledge their role in teaching children and communities what counts as 'Appalachian music'. It will also be interesting to see how after-school programmes adapt to reflect ongoing patterns of immigration, economic change and technological development in the coming years.

There is much more to learn about Appalachian after-school programmes. Our objective was to provide a general overview of the activities and curriculum of these programmes, with an eye to assessing them as agents of cultural intervention. However, our findings could be richly supplemented by observation-based studies of individual programmes, assessment of student learning outcomes or longitudinal investigations of students' involvement in traditional music-making. It would be interesting to collect demographic data (especially place of birth, race and socio-economic status) on teachers and students in order to better understand who shapes these programmes and who is being served by them. In sum, we intend this study only as the introduction to forthcoming literature on the subject.

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### CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

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Andrew Malphurs is a Forsyth County resident and an alumnus of the University of North Georgia, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in biology. During his time there, he was heavily involved in Appalachian studies and took part in several classes and projects related to the field. The Appalachian Mountains have always felt like home for Andrew, and consequently, he is always seeking to obtain more knowledge about the culture and history of the region. He currently co-owns a music and art studio in Cumming, GA, and serves as a board member of Keep Forsyth County Beautiful. He hopes to use the studio as an opportunity to educate others about Appalachian music and how to best perform it in accordance with tradition.

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