

Stuart R. Givens Memorial Fellowship

From childhood to the present, I have always heard stories from my grandmother of growing up as an African American in rural North Carolina. As a young girl, she experienced a great deal of racial injustice, but also told me of her most memorable experiences, mainly in relation to the church and old-time string band music. Her son-in-law, my father, has dedicated much of his career to being a musician as a school music teacher and by playing piano/organ in predominantly black churches in central Ohio. Growing up in this culture, I had learned a great deal about the modes, forms, and performance styles of gospel music in various churches and various other forms of African American religious music in the United States (specifically in the north, where his family has been for over 150 years). However, as I further my studies in classical saxophone, I have hoped to learn more about the other side of my family from the Carolinas and their music performance styles. As my father's family has existed for longer in Ohio, they have absorbed many of the idioms of the musical culture. However, as my grandmother is not a musician, she has limited knowledge of the specifics of how her family and local community played their music.

As a third-year undergraduate at Bowling Green State University, my interests in both classical saxophone performance and music cultures have led me to studying western art music as well as music from various other parts of the world. Throughout my studies, I have found a wealth of knowledge of these areas through the mentorship of my professors in the Ethnomusicology department of the College of Musical Arts. Through independent research I did this past winter session, I found a great deal of information through the online sound

recordings of the Smithsonian Folkways and its cataloged articles. However, there are many topics, articles, scores, and recordings that I would like to uncover that are difficult to render with the limited resources that are available to me through the interlibrary loan program and other resources here at BGSU. These materials could provide insight on how the old-time music has changed from pre-civil war to my grandmother's childhood and up to the present.

Consequently, Dr. Christopher Witulski here at BGSU has put me in contact with Mr. Gregory Adams, an archivist with the Smithsonian Folkways department. He has encouraged me to apply to intern with him this summer to gain closer access to these materials. As he focuses on studying old time string band traditions and has made important contributions to scholarship on my topic of interest, spending time with him at the Smithsonian Folkways would prove extremely beneficial.

In continuation of my interests in my grandmother's music, I have recently begun to learn how to play banjo in the old-time style. However, this is an extremely social and interactive music style. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to understand the performance contexts of string band music without playing with other musicians. Sadly, here in Bowling Green, the only jam session available to me does not focus on either old-time or minstrel music, but the roots music revival movement. Mr. Adams, a banjoist himself, has offered to put me in contact with other old-time musicians in the Washington D.C. area in order to participate in the performative aspect of this style to increase my knowledge through oral transmission as opposed to learning from books. Though he mostly works in the archives in Washington, he also teaches at the Midwest Banjo camp in Lansing, Michigan alongside other notable banjo teachers. In addition, the current instrument that I have been working on and was able to properly acquire was made for the bluegrass style of playing. This instrument has numerous structural issues that will not allow me

to have an appropriate understanding of how the instrument is played. This further study of performance practice on an appropriate instrument would help me better experience the music more authentically. As a historical ethnomusicologist with interest in the music of my family's past, I hope to learn what goes through a performer's mind until one actually plays the music. Therefore, I have found an instrument from a reputable manufacturer who makes banjos of various quality for old-time and contemporary playing. Though most banjo makers of this style usually require large fees, Gold Tone Music Group makes high quality instruments for intermediate players.

As a student of ethnomusicology, my interests have led me toward looking at hybridity throughout African American music culture in the United States. This semester, I have and will continue to present at various conferences on stylistic hybridity in the black string band tradition. As I studied this music, it began to raise questions about how the music tradition has inserted itself into American culture and intertwined it with conceptions of race in the American south. My goal, if I receive the honor of utilizing the Stuart R. Givens Memorial Fellowship, would be to better learn the technique of this performance style told from my family's roots through participating in the Midwest Banjo Camp, and then to further my educational pursuits as a historical ethnomusicologist through the study of the Ralph Rinzler Folklife archival collections at the Folkways department as well as the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives at the National Museum of African Art. Interaction with these archives while also working as an intern for this major research institution would help me understand the multiple layers, both musical and historical, surrounding this tradition. This internship would also train me in research and cataloguing skills that are critical for my success in the historical ethnomusicology discipline. As I am grateful for the mentorship of my professors here at BG, I feel as though this fostering of

my academic interests would assist in my understandings of my cultural past in relation to my own musical training.

As an intern with the Smithsonian Folkways department, I will spend a great deal of time cataloging and organizing the sound recording collection. This will help me better understand the categorization methodologies used by these archives and will allow me to work closely with many of the scores, recordings, and physical instruments that pertain to my area of interest. Additionally, while living in Washington D.C., I would like to visit the collections of musical instruments, posters, and photographic images of both the National Museum of American History and National Museum of African American History and Culture. Hopefully I will also be able to spend time with their experts on the old-time tradition in order to better understand how it has changed over time.

In the month of June, the Midwest Banjo Camp has fixed rates for students visiting for the weekend or for the duration of the camp. As a student from out of state, I would need to choose the overnight housing option, which includes meals. Additionally, the cost of driving to the camp in central Michigan would be included in the travel expenses. In order to properly participate in the camp effectively as a musician, I have also found an appropriate banjo from a reputable dealer for a fair price. I have found housing at George Washington University within metro commuting distance to the National Mall as well as other locations throughout the city during my stay in Washington D.C. Additionally, the fees for metro passes in the city do vary from day to day and location to location, therefore the cost may vary for the duration of my 10-week stay, which I have accounted for. In my budget, I have also allotted a fund for meals in the city, accounting for purchased meals as well as grocery shopping to reduce the cost of food. As I will be traveling with multiple instruments, my banjo and saxophone and various incidentals, the

ideal mode of travel for me would be to drive to Washington D.C. with my father. Upon my arrival, my father and I would arrange transportation via rental car.

To fulfill my longing to connect my musical upbringing with the sounds of my family's past, I hope that the Stuart R. Givens Memorial Fellowship could provide me funding for this opportunity. Allowing me to take this journey will let me explore my roots as well as advance my scholarly pursuits. Participating in the banjo camp along with connecting with musicians in the Washington D.C. area will also allow me to learn the stories of these people and better grasp the continuation of historic music tradition of old-time music.

Joseph Z. Johnson

Stuart R Givens Memorial Fellowship Budget

Banjo- \$858

CB-100: Clawhammer Banjo- \$690

Planetary Tuners  
1/2 in Maple rim  
Planetary Tuners  
Maple Wood Bridge

Banjo Case- \$90

Protection Plan- \$78

Banjo Camp- \$790

June 6-9th, 2019

4-Day Resident Student option

Tuition: Lessons + Classes- \$595

-Includes Room

Resident dining option- \$195

-Meals Thursday Dinner- Sunday Lunch

Housing- \$2715

Washington D.C. June 28th\*- August 8th, 2019

Airbnb pricing: \$1,673/ month

57% monthly price discount for stays longer than 28 days -\$2,861

Service Fee: \$203

Taxes and fees: \$353

Includes Utilities, Kitchen, Parking, Gym, Wifi,

\*Dates were adjusted in order to attend the Folklife Festival

Food- \$2205

Est \$45/ day in Washington D.C.

Travel Expenses- \$632

est. Gas price \$.08/ mi

Drive to and from Olivet, MI: \$25

Approx.311 mi roundtrip

Drive to Washington D.C.: \$77

Approx. 960 mi roundtrip

Washington D.C. Metro Card: \$540

varying daily rates avg. \$11/day

Covers Metro and Busses

Emergency Operational Expenses-\$300

Total: \$7,500