

dirk powell/riley baugus

teacher's resource guide



table of contents

intersections of traditional american folk music.....	3
geography.....	4
the instruments.....	6
meet the artists.....	8
teaching questions & activities.....	11
helpful links.....	12



**“This is my life
and what I love
and what moves
me. It’s time to
share it without
any limitations”**

- Dirk Powell



intersections of traditional american folk music

appalachian/cajun/bluegrass/folk

Much like America herself, the rich fabric of folk music is integrally woven with the individual strands of global traditions. What has come to be known as American folk music, traditional or traditional folk music, and contemporary folk music or roots music, is truly a melting pot of musical sub-genres, including: bluegrass, country music, gospel, old time music, Appalachian folk and jug bands, blues, and Cajun and Native American music. Several contemporary musical traditions, such as rhythm and blues (R & B), jazz, and rock and roll developed from the interaction of these initially disparate, now unified, musical forms.

Appalachian music is geographically linked to the Appalachian region of the Eastern United States, where several immigrant European traditions, including English ballads, Irish and Scottish fiddle music, and hymns, blended to create this uniquely new and American musical expression. African-American blues also figured prominently in the evolution of Appalachian music.

Appalachian music was first catalogued and recorded in the 1920s and was considered instrumental in the development of old-time music, country music and bluegrass - all of which paved the way for the American folk music revival of the 1960s.

Cajun music follows a similar trajectory as Appalachian music. Initially rooted in the French-Canadian folk traditions of Acadia, it evolved from European immigrants over a long period of



time. The fiddle was the predominant instrument during its early years, but that instrument has slowly been replaced by the accordion, as the Cajun tradition has been influenced by multiple immigrant traditions throughout Louisiana. In 2007 the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences created the Grammy Award for the Best Zydeco or Cajun Music Album. Zydeco music is an extension of Creole and Cajun music and African American blues and jazz.

geography

appalachia

The Appalachian region of the United States is predominantly defined culturally, though loose geographic borders are observed. The region extends from the Southern Tier of New York to northern Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. The cultural region is often geographically confused with the limits of the Appalachian Mountains, which stretch from Belle Isle in Canada to the Cheaha Mountains in Alabama. Culturally, the region is only located in the lower 2/3rds of the mountain range's geography.

Due to its geographic isolation, many anthropologists and ethnomusicologists continue their study of Appalachian culture as a means to gain insight into the well-preserved traditions of the region's inhabitants.

Today the region is home to nearly 25 million people in 12 states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi), including the major cities of Pittsburgh, PA; Knoxville, TN; Chattanooga, TN; and Asheville, NC.



cajun

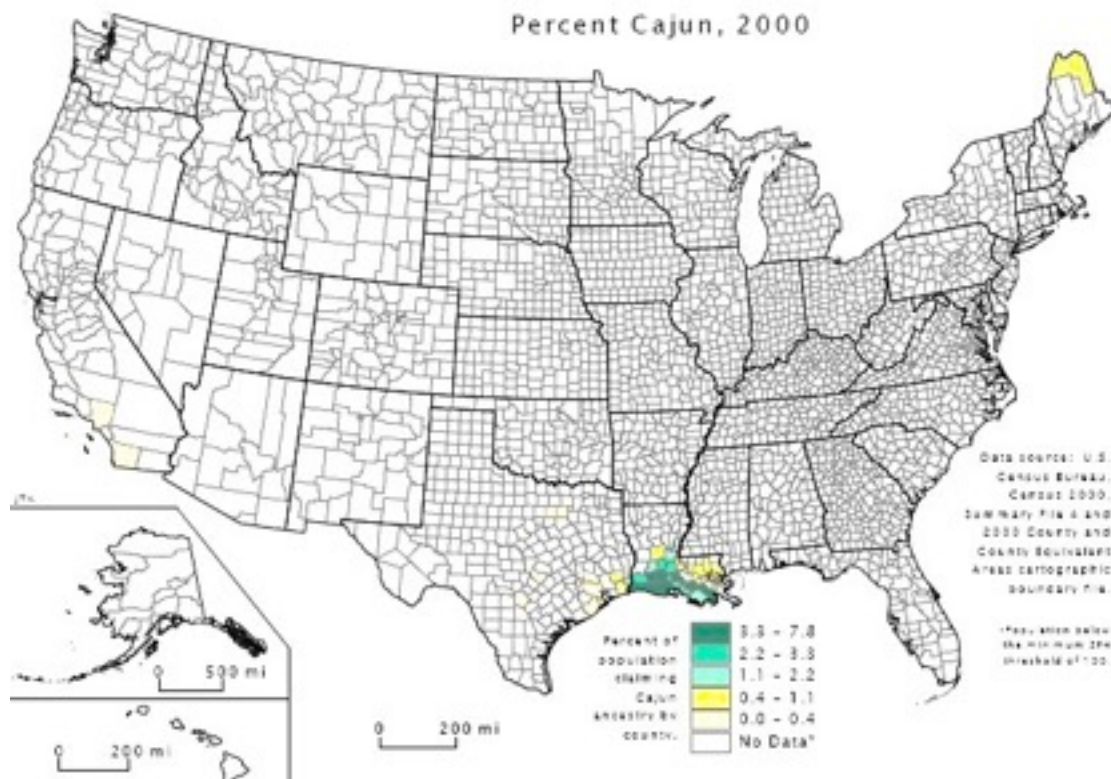
Acadian-Creoles or Cajuns are an ethnic group whose descendants now reside primarily in Louisiana and Texas.



French-speaking residents of Acadia, or what is now the Maritime provinces of Canada, were forcibly removed during The Great Expulsion, between 1755 and 1764, when English and French hostilities increased prior to The Seven Years' War.

Acadian exiles were initially deported to rural communities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and South Carolina. Many families migrated to coastal cities, where they gathered in poor French-speaking Catholic communities. Fearful that the exiles would migrate north to French-controlled regions, British forces began deporting the Acadians to France instead of the American Colonies during the second wave of the Expulsion.

In 1785, 1,600 Acadian exiles sailed from France with Henri Peyroux de la Coudreniere for Louisiana, which had been transferred to Spanish rule in 1762. The settlement of portions of Louisiana by the Acadians was aided by the good relations between France and Spain, both of whom shared a common Catholic religion. Many Acadians swore oaths of allegiance to the Spanish government as a good faith gesture during the initial settlement period. Most families first settled in the area near the Mississippi River (New Orleans), and then later near the Atchafalaya Basin and the prairie lands to the West - a region later renamed Acadiana. By this point the Acadians comprised the largest ethnic group living in Louisiana. The name *Acadian* was later elided (shortened) to *Cadien*, and eventually *Cajun*.



the instruments

banjo

The banjo is a four to six string instrument that features prominently in American folk and old-time music. Similar to a guitar, sound is produced when the strings are plucked or, less commonly, strummed. Unlike most string instruments, the banjo does not have a full body. A thin membrane, similar to a (snare) drum head, is stretched over a frame or cavity as a resonator. Some instruments may or may not have a closed back as part of the resonator.



The instrument itself is a descendant of a family of West African string instruments, specifically the *kora*, a fact that many people find surprising upon first hearing. The *kora* is made of a skin head (animal hide, usually goat), a gourd, and strings - up to 21 - made of fishing line. Extending from the calabash, or gourd, is a long bamboo pole to which leather straps are affixed. The strings themselves are attached to these leather straps. Though the banjo and *kora* appear similar, their sound, when played side-by-side, makes their similarities more strikingly apparent.

The modern banjo may also find relation with several instrument from Mali or Senegal, including the *ngoni* (1 to 3 strings), *konou* (2 strings), *juru keleni* (1 string), and the *akonting*.

The banjo first came to America aboard slave ships bound for the West Indies from West Africa in the 1600s and 1700s. The banjo evolved over time as new manufacturing processes and materials became available. The Industrial Revolution provided instrument builders with access to large amounts of metal which they quickly incorporated into its design. Most modern instruments feature frets (though some fretless banjos are still produced), similar to a guitar, and five-strings - with the fifth string providing a drone tone.



Riley Baugus is not only known for his eminent performance skill and powerful singing voice, but also for the high quality craftsmanship with which he manufactures his many instruments, including his banjos.

fiddle

The fiddle is more specifically referred to as a violin. There are really no distinctions between a violin and fiddle, though fiddles may be smaller and less refined in their construction. Fiddle is most commonly used to refer to a violin played by a folk musician or for the purposes of folk music. Additionally, fiddle music is most often taught via aural (by ear) tradition, as opposed to with printed (notated) music. Fiddle technique and style may also be considered less refined.



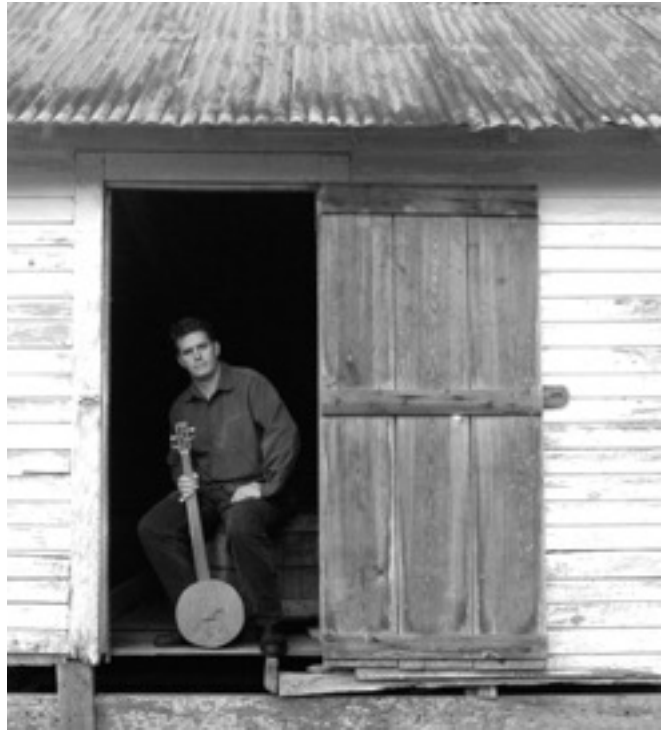
The violin is a string instrument consisting of a wooden hollow body, four tunable strings, and a bridge supporting the strings above the body and finger board. The early fiddle emerged, as a relative of the violin, in 10th century Europe and is related to the Byzantine *lira*. Sound is produced when the strings are bowed (a bow is a piece of wood to which horse hair is affixed) or plucked (*pizzicato*). As the strings are played, vibrations are transmitted through the bridge into the body, which acts as a resonator - amplifying and “warming” the sound. The front of the body and the back of the body are connected via a sound post, a small cylindrical piece of wood just underneath the bridge, on the inside of the body. The sound post is critical for transmitting the vibrations throughout the instrument. The violin is traditionally a fretless instrument, and the pitch is changed on each string by depressing a finger on the finger board - the closer the finger is placed to the bridge, the shorter the string becomes, and thus the higher the sound.



meet the artists

about dirk powell

Dirk Powell has expanded on the deeply rooted sounds of his Appalachian heritage to become one of the preeminent traditional American musicians of his generation. In addition to his widely influential solo recordings, he has recorded and performed with artists such as Emmylou Harris, Levon Helm, Jack White, Joan Baez, Steve Earle, Kris Kristofferson, Linda Ronstadt and Jackson Browne. His ability to unite the essence of traditional culture with modern sensibilities has led to work with many of today's greatest film directors as well, including Ang Lee, Anthony Minghella, Spike Lee, Victor Nuñez and Steve James. He was a founding member of the important Cajun group Balfa Toujours and has been a regularly featured artist in the award-



winning BBC series The Transatlantic Sessions. In addition to performing under his own name in a wide variety of settings, Dirk also tours regularly with Joan Baez, playing 7 instruments during each performance.

Dirk's soulful and emotionally fearless music has carried him to a unique place in today's musical landscape -- one where tradition, innovation, and inspiration meet without borders.

As a child, Dirk learned guitar from his father and banjo and fiddle from his grandfather. He studied classical piano early on, but found that the music being handed to him by family members, with love and generosity, gave him a voice that resonated more deeply with the stories and emotions he aspired to share. This love for traditional music found him spending most of his teenage years traveling around remote parts of the Southern US, eventually landing in Louisiana, where he learned Creole and Cajun music from his mentors Dewey Balfa and Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin. He has made his home in Louisiana since 1993 while continuing to release acclaimed recordings based in his Appalachian heritage.



Dirk's combination of rural roots and formal training make him a unique force in the world of music and film. His extensive work with Anthony Minghella on the Academy Award-winning film *Cold Mountain* included on-set consulting, arranging traditional and original music for the screen, performing the banjo parts of a central character, and acting. He has worked with several other world-renowned directors, such as Ang Lee on *Ride With the Devil*, Spike Lee on *Bamboozled*, and Victor Nuñez on *Coastlines*. Dirk has also composed score for several award-winning documentary and dramatic films, including *Stranger With a Camera*, *Stevie*, and *Thoughts in the Presence of Fear*. His end credit composition for *In the Electric Mist* has received wide acclaim.

Dirk's television credits include two appearances on *Late Night with David Letterman*, *The Today Show* and the *American Masters* series on PBS. He has appeared on the radio programs *All Things Considered*, *World Café*, *Weekend Edition*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, *E-Town*, *Mountain Stage*, and many others, both in the US and abroad.

Through his recordings with Loretta Lynn, Irma Thomas, Tim O'Brien, and the Raconteurs, Dirk was a featured performer on projects winning Grammy awards four years in a row in four different categories. The recording studio he designed and operates, The Cypress House, counts Joan Baez, Linda Ronstadt, James McMurtry and others among its clients. Ronstadt's project *Adieu False Heart* was nominated for a Grammy not only in the folk category but also in the non-classical engineering category – a tribute, in part, to Dirk's acoustic design of the space. Dirk's original songs have been performed and recorded by a wide variety of artists and his production skills have shaped many powerful recordings over the last twenty years.

Dirk is a recognized force within the international musical scene. His bonds with Louisiana and with the mountains of Kentucky are unmistakable – but so is his far-reaching vision and ability to translate the essence of tradition to audiences who need the timeless and sustaining messages that tradition brings.

about riley baugus

Riley Baugus represents the best of old time American banjo and song. His powerful singing voice and his expert musicianship place him squarely in the next generation of the quality American roots tradition.

Riley first came to music through his family. His father had left his roots in the mountains of North Carolina in the search for work, settling near Winston-Salem and bringing with him a love of old time music and a record collection that included, amongst others, the works of fellow North Carolinian Doc Watson, which touched the young Riley on a molecular level.





His family's attendance at Regular Baptist church gave him early exposure to the unaccompanied singing that is a time-honored tradition for ballad singers throughout the Appalachians. Starting on the fiddle, Riley quickly moved on to the banjo, building his first instrument from scrap wood with his father.

With friend and neighbour, Kirk Sutphin, Riley began honing his musical skills. Together they visited elder traditional musicians throughout North Carolina and Virginia, learning the Round Peak style at the knee of National Heritage Award winner Tommy Jarrell and other traditional musicians of the area, including Dix Freeman, Chester McMillian and former Camp Creek Boys members Verlin Clifton and Paul Sutphin.

Over the years, whilst working as a welder and a blacksmith by day, Riley played with many old time string bands, including the Old Hollow String Band and the Red Hots. His self-produced recording, "Life Of Riley" (Yodel-Ay-Hee, 2001), showcases his masterful, elegant banjo playing and his rich, raw boned singing voice.

One fateful day, Riley got a call from longtime friend and collaborator Dirk Powell. Dirk was involved in the music direction for the Academy Award-winning film "Cold Mountain" and had convinced the producers that they needed Civil War era banjos made in the Carolina hills, specifically Riley's handmade banjos. They also needed an authentic acapella ballad singer for the voice of Pangle, played by Ethan Suplee. Riley put the hammer down on the anvil and didn't look back. A whirlwind Hollywood experience ensued, culminating in a place on the star studded "Great High Mountain" tour.

From there, Riley has made his own path, building in-demand instruments and performing at festivals all over the world. He made musical contributions to the Appalshop film, "Thoughts In The Presence of Fear", and to a film by Erika Yeomans; "Grand Gorge: No God But Me". He has worked with the Lonesome Sisters as producer and performer on their recording "Going Home Shoes". Riley collaborated with Laurelyn Dossett and Preston Lane of Triad Stage on theatrical presentations featuring original and traditional southern Appalachian music.

His next recording, "Long Steel Rail" (Sugar Hill Records, 2006), produced by Tim O'Brien and Dirk Powell, appeared to critical acclaim, with Billboard Magazine heralding it as "...quintessential American old-time music. The instrumental component is impeccable, while



Baugus' vocals sound like they've been echoing through the Appalachian Mountains for about 150 years."

In 2008, a call from T-Bone Burnett put Riley back in the studio in Nashville, this time as a contributor to the Grammy award winning Album Of The Year, "Raising Sand" - the multi-million selling album by Alison Krauss and Robert Plant. Two years later, Riley's banjo playing was featured on Willie Nelson's Grammy nominated recording "Country Music".

Riley has taught at camps and festivals around the world, including Augusta Heritage Festival and Augusta Old Time Week, Mars Hill College's Blue Ridge Old Time Music Week, Midwest Banjo Camp in Lansing, MI, the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago, the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, WA and Sore Fingers Week in the UK.

When not teaching or building banjos, Riley can be found out on the road performing. He plays with the Dirk Powell Band and with Kirk Sutphin. He is a frequent guest of Polecat Creek and of Tim O'Brien with Dirk Powell. With Ira Bernstein, he presents the show "Appalachian Roots", a unique showcase of Appalachian music and dance.

Riley makes his home near Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

teaching questions & activities

- 1.) **Teach students about the ballad form of poetry/singing/storytelling that figures so prominently in traditional Appalachian music.** The following link provides a detailed lesson plan that is ready applicable and easily adaptable. http://www.poetryoutloud.org/uploads/fl/0a826ada42/POL_The_Tabloid_Ballad.pdf PBS also has a lesson plan focused on **Blues Lyrics**. <http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/intlyrics.html>
- 2a.) Complete lesson plan for **Grades 1-2** on Zydeco (Cajun/Creole) music. **Zydeco est Gumbo: An Introduction to Zydeco Music.** <http://www.folkways.si.edu/zydeco-est-gumbo-introduction/haitian-folk-french-canadian-dance/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>
- 2b.) This lesson plan covers the same information, but is designed for **Grades 3-8**. **Musical Gumbo: A Whole Lotta Creole, Cajun, and Zydeco Goin' On.** <http://www.folkways.si.edu/gumbo-whole-lotta-creole-cajun-zydeco-goin-on/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>
- 3.) Complete lesson plan for **Grades 3-5** on Bluegrass music. **Bluegrass Music: A Toe-Tapping Exploration of an American Art Form.** <http://www.folkways.si.edu/bluegrass-toe-tapping-exploration-american-art-form/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>



4.) Complete lesson plan for **Grades 6-8** on Old Time Music. **A New Day for Old Time Music from the South.** <http://www.folkways.si.edu/new-day-old-time-south/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>

5.) Complete lesson plan for **Grades 3-8** on folk music evolution. **Blending African and Irish Sensibilities in Virginia's Music.** <http://www.folkways.si.edu/blending-african-and-irish-sensibilities-in-virginias-music/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>

helpful links

NPR/All Things Considered Article/Broadcast on Banjo:
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95607716>

Bela Fleck "Throw Down Your Heart" Documentary on Banjo:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s92V_ehC_Pg

North Shore News Article on Dirk Powell:
<http://www.nsnews.com/entertainment/old-time-spirit-lives-on-in-dirk-powell-1.372922>

Film/Documentary - Appalachian Journey
<http://www.folkstreams.net/film,128>

