

BIG FAMILY

THE STORY OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC

Darol Anger is an Associate Professor at the Berklee School of Music and an accomplished fiddler, producer and composer. He has spent his career exploring diverse genres and leading the evolution of string bands as a soloist and an ensemble player. Anger has worked with musicians including Bela Fleck, Earl Scruggs and the Detroit Symphony, and his music has been featured on NPR's *Car Talk* and in the Sim City computer games.

Dale Ann Bradley is a five-time winner of the Female Bluegrass Vocalist of the Year award, presented by the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). Her storied career dates to her high school days and weekly gigs at Pine Mountain State Park in Kentucky with her first band, Backporch Grass. After a hiatus, Bradley returned to music and took up a musical residency at Renfro Valley, where she often performed on *The Sunday Morning Gatherin'* and became a member of The New Coon Creek Girls. After recording four albums with this group, she was offered a solo deal and her first release, *East Kentucky Morning*, catapulted her into international media and airplay. In the intervening years, she has been nominated for and won numerous awards from the IBMA and the Grammys and has worked with such artists as Alison Brown, Vince Gill and Pam Tillis.

Alison Brown is a Grammy Award-winning banjo player, guitarist, composer and producer. While she emerged from the Southern California bluegrass scene, Brown has taken her banjo work to new heights, incorporating elements of folk, jazz, Celtic and Latin music into her playing. A graduate of Harvard with an MBA from UCLA, she explored her entrepreneurial side in the 1990s, when she and her husband, Gary West, launched Compass Records. She has collaborated with artists from multiple genres, including Indigo Girls, Keb' Mo' and Alison Krauss.

Becky Buller is a two-time Grammy award-winning songwriter and an eight-time International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) award winner who made bluegrass music history in 2016 by becoming the first artist ever to win in both instrumental and vocal categories, as well as the first female to win Fiddle Player of The Year. An accomplished songwriter, Buller has written for artists including The Infamous Stringdusters and The Travelin' McCoury's.

Sam Bush is a Grammy Award-winning mandolin player and founder of New Grass Revival. A native of Bowling Green, Ky., he purchased his first mandolin at age 11 after being inspired by his parents' record collection and the performance of a young Ricky Skaggs at the Grand Ole Opry. Bush's professional career began when he was asked to perform five nights a week in Louisville with the Bluegrass Alliance. Following the dissolution of that group in 1971, he and three of his bandmates formed the pioneering New Grass Revival, influence by jam and rock-&-roll music. During his career, Bush has released seven albums and a live DVD and, in 2009, was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Americana Music Association.

Michael Cleveland is an award-winning fiddler and leader of Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper. Considered one of the premier bluegrass fiddlers of his generation, Mike picked up a fiddle at age four, and his talent was recognized early. In 1993, he was chosen to be part of the Bluegrass Youth All Stars at the International Bluegrass Music Association's (IBMA) award show. Later that year, Mike made his Grand Ole Opry debut as a guest of Alison Krauss. After joining Rhonda Vincent and the Rage in 2000, he won his first Fiddle Player of the Year award and shared the Entertainer of the Year award with his group. Over the years, Cleveland has won a record-breaking 10 more Fiddle Player of the Year awards and established himself as a sought-after guest who has performed with Vince Gill, J.D. Crowe and the New South, Marty Stuart and more.

Martino Coppo is a prolific mandolin player and a member of the band Red Wine. Although he was born and raised in Italy, he was attracted to American folk music from a young age and began playing guitar at age 13. Several years later, with more experience and a new instrument under his belt, he was a member of the band Green Cellar Society. It was around this time that he became awestruck with acts such as Sam Bush, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and David Grisman. In 1981, he joined Red Wine and began a musical journey that took him across Europe and the United States. Throughout his career, he has worked with numerous artists and collaborated with colleagues around the world to lead mandolin workshops and courses.

John Cowan, also known as the voice of newgrass, has been singing for 37 years. Cowan applies his powerful pipes to genres from country, bluegrass and gospel to soul, jazz and rock-and-roll – often during a single concert. Along with his New Grass Revival bandmates, he introduced fans to an explosive, experimental style of bluegrass. He is credited on over 100 recordings by artists such as Kenny Rogers, John Prine, Darius Rucker, Roseanne Cash and The Doobie Brothers.

J.D. Crowe is a bluegrass legend who became entranced with the music the first time he heard Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys in his native Lexington, Kentucky, as a 12-year-old in 1949. He picked up a banjo shortly after and his musical career took off when Jimmy Martin heard Crowe playing on a local radio show and invited him to perform in Middletown, Ohio. The two continued to play together, on and off, until 1961, when Crowe returned to his hometown to work a “day job” so he could make a steady living. In Kentucky, J.D. teamed up with other local part-time musicians to work weekends in several taverns. They took the name The Kentucky Mountain Boys and later became The New South. The group would go on to perfect an acoustic sound and, after some key additions in 1974, became one of the most brilliant ensembles in bluegrass music. In addition to The New South, Crowe spent time with The Bluegrass Album Band and recorded six best-selling albums with the supergroup. A 2003 inductee into the Bluegrass Hall of Fame, Crowe remains active in the music industry.

Jerry Douglas is to the resonator guitar what Jimi Hendrix was to the electric guitar, elevating, transforming and reinventing the instrument in countless ways. Called “Dobro’s matchless contemporary master” by *The New York Times*, the three-time Country Music Association (CMA) Musician of the Year award winner performs as a solo artist and with The Jerry Douglas Band and The Earls of Leicester. Douglas has also been a member of

groundbreaking ensembles such as Alison Krauss and Union Station, JD Crowe and The New South, and The Country Gentleman. In addition to his own music, Douglas is an active collaborator and producer. His work has appeared on more than 1,500 albums by artists such as Garth Brooks, Earl Scruggs and Emmylou Harris. In 2004, he was recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts with an American Heritage Fellowship, and he served as the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's Artist in Residence in 2008.

Terry Eldredge's soulful vocals and easygoing stage presence have earned him not only the loyalty of bluegrass fans and the appreciation of fellow bluegrass musicians, but the admiration of a stunningly wide variety of entertainers who have witnessed him fronting the Sidemen at Nashville's world-famous Station Inn. The Indiana native began his career with first-hand experience of the music of an earlier generation of country stars, playing bass with longtime Opry stars Lonzo and Oscar. He joined the Osborne Brothers in 1988, soon switching to guitar and adding a powerful lead and low tenor voice to the Brothers' legendary trios. Eldredge took up the bass again when he joined Larry Cordle & Lonesome Standard Time at the end of the 1990s, earning a 2003 IBMA nomination for Bass Player of the Year and contributing mightily to the ensemble's success with dynamic tenor and lead vocals. During a hiatus from Lonesome Standard Time, he recorded and performed as a member of Dolly Parton's Blue-niques. In addition to two solo albums for Pinecastle Records and albums by the Osborne Brothers, Cordle, Parton and the Sidemen, Terry's recording credits include appearances on CDs by IBMA Hall of Honor members Benny Martin, Josh Graves and Chubby Wise, as well as country star Dierks Bentley.

Chris Eldridge has been at the vanguard of acoustic music for much of the past decade as an original member of the Punch Brothers. Although initially drawn to the electric guitar, by his mid-teens, the musician had developed a deep love of acoustic music, thanks in part to his father, a banjo player and founding member of the seminal bluegrass group The Seldom Scene. Eldridge later gained in-depth exposure to a variety of different musical styles while studying at Oberlin Conservatory, where he earned a degree in music performance in 2004. After graduating, he joined The Seldom Scene, with whom he received a Grammy nomination in 2007. In 2005, he founded the critically-acclaimed bluegrass band The Infamous Stringdusters which won several awards. At the same time, Eldridge joined forces with several other musicians to embark on an ambitious side project that quickly evolved to become the Punch Brothers. The band has since released six critically-acclaimed albums, received six Grammy nominations and toured around the world. Eldridge is currently the house guitarist on the public radio show *Live from Here* and has worked with artists such as Justin Timberlake, Del McCoury and Elvis Costello.

Dr. Rex Ellis is the Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American Heritage and Culture. He has contributed articles to such publications as *The Journal of American History*, *The Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, *August House Publications*, and *History News*. He is the author of two books, *Beneath the Blazing Sun: Stories from the African American Journey* and *With a Banjo on My Knee*, which chronicles the history of black banjo players from the time of slavery to the present.

Silvio Ferretti started playing the banjo (and some guitar) with Beppe Gambetta in 1975 and formed Red Wine in 1978. Since then, he's been devoted to playing old-time music, influenced by Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, and the Stanley Brothers. Except for two years with the Green Cellar Society, a stint with the international band Freewheelin' and some subbing with minor bands, Red Wine has been his musical home for over 30 years.

Bela Fleck is a world-renowned banjo player who began his professional career playing with Boston-based band Tasty Licks in 1976. In 1981, Fleck got his big break when he joined New Grass Revival, with whom he spent eight years before forming his own Grammy-winning band, the Flecktones. While remaining committed to his own group for over 30 years, Fleck has been a tireless explorer of musical traditions and genres from around the world, including bluegrass, world, jazz, pop and classical. Fleck is the recipient of multiple Grammy awards and has been nominated in more categories than any other instrumentalist in history.

Jeff Hanna is a founding member of the venerable Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, which celebrated its 50th anniversary playing music in 2016. As a member of the band, Hanna played an integral role in its seminal *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* album which featured two generations of bluegrass and country artists, including Mother Maybelle Carter, Earl Scruggs and Doc Watson.

Ed Helms is an actor, writer and comedian who has established himself as one of Hollywood's most beloved performers with scene-stealing roles on both film and television, including NBC's award-winning comedy series *The Office* and the box office smash hit film trilogy *The Hangover*.

Michio Higashi is an enthusiastic bluegrass fan who has been informally labeled as an ambassador of the genre. He first fell in love with bluegrass in the 1960s when he tuned into the Far East Network (FEN) that served American Armed Forces in Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines and Guam.

Sierra Hull is a seasoned performer who made her Grand Ole Opry debut at age 10, performed at Carnegie Hall at age 12 and released her debut album just a year later at age 13. After winning an International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) award in 2010, Hull got back to work, releasing her second album and organizing a huge bluegrass festival in her hometown of Byrdstown, Tenn. By 2016, she was more mature, both in her life and art, and her third album, *Weighted Mind*, reflected that, blending progressive elements with traditional structure and earned her a Grammy nod. She is currently working on her next album which will contain all original songs.

Saburo "Sab" Inoue is a founding member of the influential Japanese band Bluegrass 45, which has been playing off and on since 1967. He and bandmate Toshio Watanabe started Bluegrass and Old Time Music Services (BOMS) and in 1971 founded the Takarazuka Bluegrass Festival, one of the oldest in the world. Today, Inoue is the publisher of *Moonshiner Magazine*, a Japanese language monthly bluegrass journal.

Kaia Kater is a Montreal-born Grenadian-Canadian whose jazz-fueled voice and deft songcraft have garnered acclaim from NPR, CBC, *Rolling Stone* and *No Depression*. Her 2016 release, *Nine*

Pin, earned a Canadian Folk Music Award, sending her on 18 months of touring from Ireland to Iowa. Her new album, *Grenades*, explores themes of migration and belonging and has been nominated for a 2019 JUNO award.

Takumi Kodera is a bluegrass/jazz banjo player from Yokohama, Japan. He started to play banjo at the age of 11 and has been involved in a number of musical projects through his teens, playing music that ranges from pop standards to impeccable Bach transcriptions to innovative acoustic originals. He won the grand prize at the Yokohama Banjo Player's Contest in 2012 and has appeared onstage at festivals on many continents.

Jim Lauderdale helped lay out the blueprint for the Americana movement of the 1990s, earning high critical marks for an eclectic series of albums that spanned hard country, slick pop, rootsy rock & roll, blues, folk, R&B, and bluegrass. Stylistically restless, Lauderdale's roots were in hard country and bluegrass, but his first album to be released, 1991's *Planet of Love*, was a savvy blend of rock, blues and traditional country influences. It scored rave reviews, as did its follow-up, 1994's *Pretty Close to the Truth*. With 1999's *I Feel Like Singing Today*, a collaboration with Dr. Ralph Stanley, he revealed he was also a first-rate bluegrass vocalist. Over the next two decades, Lauderdale would move back and forth between electric and acoustic projects always steeped in roots music, while he also built an estimable reputation as a songwriter. His compositions were recorded — often with considerable success — by several country stars, including George Strait, Patty Loveless, Vince Gill, Mark Chestnutt, Kathy Mattea and George Jones.

John Lawless served as primary editor and author for *The Bluegrass Blog* from its launch in 2006 until it was folded into *Bluegrass Today* in September of 2011. He manages a strong team of columnists and correspondents. Along with his *Bluegrass Blog* co-founder, Brance Gillihan, Lawless shared the 2007 Print Media Person of the Year award from the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). He is also known in the bluegrass world as the founder of AcuTab Publications and as a musician. Lawless plays bajo with Acoustic Endeavors, a bluegrass group based near his home in Roanoke, Va. and has a solo banjo album of his own, *Five & Dime* on the Copper Creek label.

Marian Leighton Levy has spent her entire adult life in the record business, having co-founded Rounder with partners Ken Irwin and Bill Nowlin the year she graduated from college. From a three-person collective, Rounder grew to encompass thousands of artists over a broad range of music in its nearly 50 years of existence.

Laurie Lewis is internationally renowned as a singer, songwriter, fiddler, bandleader, producer and educator. She was a founding member of the Good Ol' Persons and the Giant Street String Band and has performed and recorded since 1986 with her musical partner, mandolinist Tom Rozum. Lewis has twice been voted Female Vocalist of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) and has won the respect and admiration of her peers. She has recorded nearly 20 albums in several musical formats for such labels as Flying Fish, Rounder, Hightone, Sugar Hill, Kaleidoscope, and her own Spruce & Maple Music. Her latest album with her band, the Right Hands, *The Hazel and Alice Sessions*, was nominated for the Best Bluegrass Recording Grammy in 2017.

Ned Luberecki is a renowned banjo player, teacher and radio personality on Sirius XM Satellite Radio's Bluegrass Junction. He was named Banjo Player of the Year in 2018 by the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). Luberecki is the banjo player for The Becky Buller Band and also tours with Stephen Mouglin (of the Sam Bush Band) as Nedski and Mojo. Luberecki was formerly the banjoist for Chris Jones and the Night Drivers, The Rarely Herd, Larry Cordle & Lonesome Standard Time, The Gary Ferguson Band, Radio Flyer, and Paul Adkins and the Borderline Band.

Del McCoury began performing with various bands in the 1960s, playing throughout the Washington, DC and Baltimore area and eventually came to the attention of the legendary Bill Monroe and joined his band, the Blue Grass Boys, in 1963. It was Monroe, the "Father of Bluegrass" who switched McCoury from banjo to guitar and first recognized that McCoury's distinctive tenor was well suited for lead vocals.

Several years later, while working in the logging industry in Pennsylvania to support his family, McCoury formed his own band, the Dixie Pals. For the next decade and a half, McCoury piloted the group through a part-time career of weekend appearances at bluegrass festivals and recordings for both specialty and roots music institutions like Arhoolie and Rounder Records.

In 1981, McCoury's 14-year-old son Ronnie joined the Dixie Pals as mandolin player, followed five years later by banjo-playing younger brother Rob. In 1992, the group moved to Nashville. Armed with a relationship with Rounder Records and a few young members, the newly-named Del McCoury Band vaulted to the top of the bluegrass world.

By the second half of the 1990s, the Del McCoury Band was engaging in onstage jams with diverse bands such as Phish and performing on the road and in the studio with Steve Earle. The group also appeared on prime-time television, began an ongoing series of visits to popular late-night TV talk shows, toured rock clubs and college campuses, and performed at country and even jazz-oriented music festivals and venues.

McCoury and his band have recorded 16 albums and in 2006 won a Grammy Award for Best Bluegrass Album for *The Company We Keep*. Named Male Vocalist of the Year for three consecutive years and winner of nine Entertainer of the Year awards from the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA), McCoury has remained a nimble, inventive guitarist whose penetrating voice and compelling singing style serve as a bridge between the original generation of bluegrass artists and today's contemporary players.

Raymond McLain is a renowned musician whose career has spanned over 40 years and 70 countries. He performed with his family, The McLain Family Band, as a musical ambassador for the U.S. Department of State and played music from the stage of the world-famous Grand Ole Opry more than a thousand times with Opry members Jim and Jesse. An advocate for the preservation of Appalachian music culture, McLain has touched the lives of countless students in his career in musical education. He has devoted much of his life to elevating the beauty of traditional music in scores of students. In turn, they grace the world with the sounds of the music he holds dear. After helping create the first Bachelor of Arts degree in Bluegrass, Old Time and Country Music at East Tennessee State University, McLain returned home, bringing

that same expertise back to the hills of Kentucky. He serves as the Director at the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music at Morehead State University. McLain regularly tours and performs with Canadian harmonica virtuoso Mike Stevens and with the McLain Family Band while continuing to record and produce.

Joe Mullins is a southwestern Ohio native who has been a recognizable banjo player, vocalist and radio broadcaster for over 30 years. Mullins toured and recorded as a founding member of the band The Traditional Grass until 1995, when he purchased WBZI Radio in Xenia, Ohio. He recorded and performed with the band Longview, earning Song of the Year and Recorded Event of the Year awards from the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) in the late 1990s. In 2001, he won the IBMA's Instrumental Recording of the Year award for his work on Rebel Records' *Knee Deep in Bluegrass*. Mullins was also one of many artists in 2006 that shared Album of the Year honors for *Celebration of Life* on Skaggs Family Records. Mullins now owns an Ohio network of radio stations — Real Roots Radio — and can be found on the air most weekdays from 1-3 p.m. featuring bluegrass and bluegrass gospel music.

Eugene O'Brien is chairman of the European Bluegrass Music Association. The organization works to inform, promote and facilitate the sharing of the genre across Europe.

Bobby Osborne was born in Southeastern Kentucky and grew up immersed in the mining songs and folk ballads of the Appalachian Mountains. He began his career with bluegrass greats including Jimmy Martin and Stanley Brothers, while his brother, Sonny, played banjo with the great Bill Monroe. The brothers formed a duo in 1953 following Bobby's discharge from the U.S. Marine Corps. Their recording debut came in 1956 and featured Sonny signing lead in a high tenor. In 1963, The Osbornes signed with Decca Records and continued to make waves with adventurous arrangements and non-traditional instruments. The duo's hit records included *Rocky Top*; *Take Me Home*, *Country Roads*; *Tennessee Hound Dog* and *Ruby*. In 1994, the brothers were inducted into the International Bluegrass Music Association's (IBMA) Hall of Honor.

Tsuyoshi "Josh" Otsuka is a founding member of the Japanese band Bluegrass 45, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017.

Giri and Uma Peters are an Indian-American brother/sister duo from Nashville, Tenn. These award-winning multi-instrumentalists — Giri on fiddle, mandolin and guitar and Uma on clawhammer and gourd banjo — have been electrifying audiences with their refreshing, soulful blend of old-time, folk and roots music. Although young in age, their musicianship and vocal harmonies showcase a level of creativity and originality well beyond their years. They attracted the attention of MacArthur Genius Grant awardee Rhiannon Giddens, who is acting as a master artist for Uma as part of the apprenticeship program in traditional arts through the Tennessee Arts Commission. They are in the process of making their first album together, which will be released in 2019.

Noam Pikelny is a founding member of Punch Brothers, a three-time Grammy nominee and was awarded the first annual Steve Martin Prize for Excellence in Banjo and Bluegrass in 2010. His latest release, *Universal Favorite*, is the fourth album he has put out under his own name.

Jaroslav Prucha is a Czech banjo player and luthier who plays in the band HPSK. He is the founder of Prucha banjos, which makes five standard models, The Pioneer, Legend, Bat, Fall in Love, and Diamond Point—each with various versions and custom alternatives. The shop also makes their electric banjo, the Alban, two open-back models, and two mandolin models.

Missy Raines has proven herself as an iconic bluegrass instrumentalist. In 1998, Raines became the first woman to win IBMA's Bass Player of the Year award and she went on to win the title repeatedly for the next several years. *Royal Traveller* highlights this particular piece of Raines' history with the stand out track “Swept Away”, which features the first five women to win International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) instrumentalist awards. “Swept Away” was named 2018 IBMA Recorded Event of the Year.

Charli Robertson is the fiddler and one of several vocalists in Flatt Lonesome, which has received numerous nominations and five International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) awards since its debut album in 2013

Kelsi Robertson Harrigill, along with her sister, Charli, is a member of bluegrass sensation Flatt Lonesome. She plays mandolin and is an accomplished vocalist.

Neil V. Rosenberg is Professor Emeritus of Folklore at Memorial University, where he taught from September 1968 until his retirement in September 2004. Specializing in the study of vernacular music traditions, Rosenberg investigated the interaction of popular music with local and regional music traditions and examined processes of cultural revival. Conducting research in Canada and the United States, he focused upon the lives and music of professional, semi-professional and amateur old-time, bluegrass, country and folk musicians. His books include *Bluegrass: A History* (1985), which was reprinted with a new preface for its 20th Anniversary Edition in 2005. Rosenberg is a Fellow of the American Folklore Society, recipient of the Marius Barbeau Medal for lifetime achievement from the Folklore Studies Association of Canada, and the only Canadian member of the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame. He has edited and written notes for many recordings, including a contribution to the brochure for the Smithsonian/Folkways reissue of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* which won a 1997 Grammy Award.

Peter Rowan is a singer-songwriter with a career spanning over five decades. From his early years playing under the tutelage of Bluegrass veteran Bill Monroe, to his time in Old & In the Way and his breakout as a solo musician and bandleader, Rowan has built a devoted, international fan base through a solid stream of recordings, collaborative projects, and constant touring.

In 1956, he formed his first band, the Cupids, while still in high school. Rowan began his professional career in 1963 as the singer, rhythm guitarist and songwriter for the Bluegrass Boys, led by the founding father of bluegrass, Bill Monroe. The late '60s and early 70's saw

Rowan involved in a number of rock, folk and bluegrass projects, including Earth Opera, Sea Train, Muleskinner, and the Rowans, where he played alongside brothers Chris and Lorin Rowan. After the Rowan Brothers disbanded, Rowan, David Grisman, Jerry Garcia, Vassar Clements and John Kahn formed a bluegrass band christened Old & In the Way. It was during this incarnation that Rowan penned the song “Panama Red,” a subsequent hit for the New Riders of the Purple Sage and a classic ever since.

Rowan subsequently embarked on a well-received solo career in the late ‘70s, releasing critically acclaimed records such as *Dustbowl Children*, *Yonder* and two extraordinarily fine bluegrass albums, *The First Whippoorwill* and *Bluegrass Boy*, as well as *High Lonesome Cowboy*, a recording of traditional and old-time mountain music with Don Edwards and Norman Blake.

Paul Schiminger is executive director of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). He joined the organization in 2015 as an avid bluegrass fan who had spent his career in banking and finance. He was interviewed for the IBMA position after being approached by a professional recruiter who knew of his credentials – and his love of bluegrass music.

Kristin Scott Benson is the four-time International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Banjo Player of the Year. She grew up in South Carolina, surrounded by a musical family. After receiving a much-anticipated banjo for Christmas when she was thirteen, Benson became enthralled with the instrument and spent her teen years studying the playing of all the banjo greats from Earl Scruggs to Bela Fleck. After high school, she attended Nashville’s esteemed Belmont University, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BBA in Marketing and a minor in Music Business. After 13 years in Nashville, she relocated back to the Carolinas with her husband and young son. Her latest solo release, *Second Season*, features eight instrumentals and four vocal performances. The album showcases her powerful banjo playing, while still appealing to fans that aren’t motivated solely by instrumental prowess. The project received stellar reviews and features some of bluegrass’ brightest musicians.

Graham Sharp began playing banjo in college. Originally introduced to bluegrass by his high school Latin teacher, Sharp was drawn to the sounds of John Hartford and Norman Blake. Through the years he has penned more than thirty Steep Canyon Rangers songs. He lives in Asheville, North Carolina and most enjoys spending time with his wife and two children, Wade and Rosalie.

Sammy Shelor is a five-time International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Award Winner for Banjo Performer of the Year, 2011 Award Winner for the Steve Martin Prize for Excellence in Banjo and Bluegrass and has received numerous other awards and recognitions during his impressive career. He currently leads the Lonesome River Band, which has been entertaining audiences for more than 33 years. Since becoming a member of Lonesome River Band (LRB), Shelor has been featured on dozens of successful recordings, both with LRB and as a guest player. His solo project, *Leading Roll*, is still a popular title in the Sugar Hill Records catalog and his work on *Knee Deep In Bluegrass* for Rebel Records helped that project earn the Instrumental Album Of The Year award from the IBMA in 2001.

Ricky Skaggs struck his first chords on a mandolin over 50 years ago and this 15-time Grammy Award winner continues to do his part to lead the recent roots revival in music. With 12 consecutive Grammy-nominated classics behind him, the diverse and masterful tones made by the gifted Skaggs come from a life dedicated to playing music that is both fed by the soul and felt by the heart.

In 1971, he entered the world of professional music along with his friend, the late country singer Keith Whitley, when the two young musicians were invited to join the band of bluegrass patriarch Ralph Stanley. Skaggs soon began to build a reputation for creativity and excitement through live appearances with acts such as J.D. Crowe & the New South. He performed on the band's 1975 debut album for Rounder Records, which is widely regarded as one of the most influential bluegrass albums ever made.

In the late 1970s, Skaggs turned his attention to country music. After serving as a member of Emmylou Harris' Hot Band, he pursued a solo career that garnered 12 number one hits. In 1982, he became a member of the Grand Ole Opry and was the youngest musician ever to be inducted at that time. As his popularity soared, he garnered eight awards from the Country Music Association (CMA), including Entertainer of the Year in 1985.

In 1997, Skaggs established his own record label, Skaggs Family Records. Since then, he and Kentucky Thunder have released 12 consecutive Grammy-nominated classics while opening the label to a variety of other artists.

Skaggs continues to tour, plugging in and playing full shows featuring his chart-topping hits.

Larry Stephenson is one of bluegrass music's most recognizable and finest high lead and tenor vocalist and has headlined festivals and concerts for over 30 years. He formed The Larry Stephenson Band in 1989 while living in his home state of Virginia. With a move to Nashville, Tenn. in 1992, the band became fast regulars on the Grand Ole Opry. In 1996, the Virginia Folk Music Association inducted Stephenson into The Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame. Since that time, he has garnered numerous International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) and Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America (SPBGMA) nominations and awards. In 2018, SPBGMA inducted Stephenson in its Hall of Greats.

Nobuyuki Taguchi is the owner of Tokyo's famed Rocky Top Music Club.

Dave Teague is chairman of the British Bluegrass Music Association. The organization was established in 1990 to support and promote bluegrass music in the United Kingdom.

Chris Thile is a young mandolin virtuoso and composer whose lyrical fusion of traditional bluegrass with elements from a range of other musical traditions is giving rise to a new genre of contemporary music. With a broad outlook that encompasses progressive bluegrass, classical, rock, and jazz, Thile is transcending the borders of conventionally circumscribed genres in compositions for his own ensembles and frequent cross-genre collaborations. Although rooted in the rhythmic structure of bluegrass, his early pieces for his long-time trio, Nickel Creek, have the improvisatory

feel of jazz; his current ensemble, Punch Brothers, evokes the ethos of classical chamber music even while adhering to the traditional instrumentation of the bluegrass quintet. Thile studied music at Murray State University. From 1989 to 2007, he was a member of the trio Nickel Creek, and in 2006 he formed Punch Brothers. Thile can be heard on NPR as host of *Live From Here*.

Molly Tuttle grew up in California in a musical family, performing at festivals with her father and two brothers. By the age of 11, Tuttle was attending bluegrass jams and decided that she wanted to do more singing and began taking voice lessons. After graduating from high school in Palo Alto, she enrolled in Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she studied in the American Roots Music Program, focusing on guitar performance and songwriting. In 2018, Tuttle was named Instrumentalist of the Year at the Americana Music Awards. She was also named the 2017 and 2018 International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Guitar Player of the Year.

Dan Tyminski has left his mark in every corner of modern music during his 30+ year career. Tyminski's voice famously accompanies George Clooney's performance of the Stanley Brother's Classic song, "I'm A Man of Constant Sorrow" in the film, *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*. His vocal collaboration with Swedish DJ Avicii on the song "Hey, Brother" was a global smash, having been streamed over 1 billion times to date. Tyminski has contributed guitar and/or harmony to projects by Martina McBride, Reba McEntire, Brad Paisley, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Kenny Chesney, Leann Rimes, Aaron Lewis and Rob Thomas, to name a few. In addition to his highly successful solo career, Tyminski has played guitar and mandolin for Alison Krauss and Union Station since 1994.

Rhonda Vincent was famously crowned "The New Queen of Bluegrass" by the *Wall Street Journal* and is one of the most decorated artists in her field. Vincent's music incorporates savvy contemporary touches while drawing deeply from the authentic traditions of classic bluegrass. Her latest project, *Taken*, features special guests ranging from Dolly Parton to Richard Marx. With over 80 awards to their name Vincent and her band, The Rage, are the most celebrated band in bluegrass.

Chris Wadsworth is the organizer of FreshGrass festival and publisher of *No Depression* magazine.

Abigail Washburn is a singing, songwriting, Illinois-born, Nashville-based clawhammer banjo player who is every bit as interested in the present and the future as she is in the past, and every bit as attuned to the global as she is to the local. One fateful day 11 years ago, Washburn was miraculously offered a record deal in the halls of a bluegrass convention in Kentucky which changed her trajectory from becoming a lawyer in China to a traveling folk musician. Since then, she has been recording and touring a continuous stream of music. Her most recent release, *Echo in the Valley* (2017), was recorded with her husband, Béla Fleck. *Echo in the Valley* is the follow up to their acclaimed, self-titled debut that earned the 2016 Grammy for Best Folk Album.

Jon Weisberger was named the International Bluegrass Music Association's (IBMA) first Songwriter of the Year in 2012. More than 160 of his songs – including a half dozen number one airplay hits – have been recorded by artists ranging from the Del McCoury Band and Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver to Sierra Hull and the Infamous Stringdusters. Weisberger plays with Chris Jones & The Night Drivers.

Pete Wernick is renowned worldwide for his accomplishments and contributions to bluegrass music: the hot-picking force in several trend-setting bands, including Hot Rize, innovative teacher and author, songwriter, and long-term president of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). Wernick's international career started in 1971 with the first records by instrumental wizards Country Cooking. Founding Hot Rize in 1978 led to an enduring stint as a performing artist, appearing throughout the U.S. and three continents, and on national television and radio. A pioneer in bluegrass music instruction, his banjo camps, bluegrass jam camps, instruction books, videos and website have inspired players across the world.

Blake Williams has been in professional entertainment for over 40 years. After nine years as a disc jockey for WSMT in Sparta, Tenn., he toured with Bobby Smith & The Boys From Shiloh and soon moved into the role of banjo player for Lester Flatt and the Nashville Grass until Lester's death in 1979. Williams went on to work with the Father of Bluegrass, Bill Monroe, for 10 years, making him Monroe's longest tenured banjo player. In 1991, he was invited to play bass with comedian, Hee Haw star and Grand Ole Opry member, Mike Snider where he stayed until 2001. In early 2002, Williams founded the group The Expedition Show (formerly Williams & Clark Expedition) and continues to perform professionally. He has toured extensively and played Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the Lincoln Center. He recorded two albums with Lester Flatt and six albums with Bill Monroe one of which, *Southern Flavor*, won the first Grammy for Bluegrass Album of The Year.