



INTRODUCTION

“RHYTHM & ROOTS, SOUTHERN MUSIC TRADITIONS”

Over the past century Southern music has become synonymous with American music through the commercial success of many Southern-born songwriters, musicians and musical styles. Although this is an important story, “Rhythm & Roots” tells a different tale. This exhibit illustrates people and themes that have shaped Southern traditional music.

“Rhythm & Roots” celebrates the enduring power of homegrown, community-based music-making throughout the nine southeastern states served by the Southern Arts Federation. These states—Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee—are home to countless groups and individuals who keep valued styles of Southern roots music alive as vital traditions. Some traditions have been passed down from generation to generation with little change. Others represent new sounds, often built on foundations laid by older musicians. Southern music has been multicultural from the beginning, the result of blending and borrowing across racial, ethnic and tribal boundaries. The interaction between European, African and American Indian musical cultures is especially significant. The musical landscape continues to evolve as new generations of immigrants from around the world—particularly from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean—introduce new sounds and traditions to communities across the South.

No exhibit on this subject can be comprehensive in scope. We hope that in these words, pictures, and sounds, you will discover things both familiar and unexpected, and you leave inspired to support and cherish Southern music and musicians.



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