APPALACHIAN BLACK FIDDLING: HISTORY AND CREATIVITY

by

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Abstract: Discussions on Appalachian music in the United States most often evoke images of instruments such as the fiddle and banjo, and a musical heritage identified primarily with Europe and European Americans, as originators or creators, when in reality, many Europeans were influenced or taught by African-American fiddlers. Not only is Appalachian fiddling a confluence of features that are both African- and European-derived, but black fiddlers have created a distinct performance style using musical aesthetics identified with African and African-American culture. In addition to a history of black fiddling and African Americans in Appalachia, this article includes a discussion of the musicking of select Appalachian black fiddlers.

Keywords: Fiddle, African Americans, European Americans, Appalachia, United States, country music, hillbilly music, old-time music.

Introduction

When discussions reference Appalachian music in the United States, several topics come to mind: old-time or string band music, instruments such as the fiddle and banjo, and a musical heritage identified primarily with Europe and European Americans.[1] In reality, many white people were influenced or taught by black fiddlers (Bastin 1986, Titon 2001, Wolfe 1982, 1987).[2] Not only is Appalachian fiddling a confluence of features that are both African- and European-derived, but black fiddlers have created a unique performance style using musical aesthetics identified with African and African-American culture. While many researchers have noted the contributions of black people to old time fiddling (DjeDje 2016, Huber 2013, Minton 1996, Otto and Burns 1974, Russell 1970, Wells 2003, Wolfe 1981, 1987, 1989, 1990, 2002), the socio-historical factors that led to this shared culture as well as the musical features that make black fiddling distinct have not been fully documented or discussed.[3]

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2 The terms old-time, hillbilly, country, and Appalachian music will be used interchangeably in this essay, although I realise that historical and musical differences exist.

3 A number of researchers have interviewed and collected primary material from Appalachian

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A discussion of black fiddling is important for several reasons. Many may not realise that the bowed lute (fiddle) in West Africa dates to possibly the eleventh century, making its history on the African continent comparable to Europe's. Similar to European cultures, the role of the instrument in different African societies led to a diversity of fiddle traditions with many that have continued into the twenty-first century (DjeDje 2008, 2018, Farmer 1929: 493,). The fiddle was the most popular instrument among enslaved Africans from their arrival in North America in the seventeenth century through the end of slavery in the mid-nineteenth century (Epstein 1977, Southern 1997, Winans 1982: 3, 1990: 47, 2018: 196).

Black fiddling continued to be prominent in select rural, urban, and neighboring areas of the Appalachian Mountains[4] in the mid-twentieth century, with black fiddlers serving as entertainers at house parties, picnics, barbecues, and other events organised by black and white people. Although their opportunities were limited due to restrictions that record company executives used to market various musics to the wider public in the early twentieth century, many black fiddlers became recording artists (Huber 2013: 20).

For a fuller understanding of the factors that influenced the development of Appalachian black fiddling, I present a concise history of African Americans in Appalachia from the seventeenth century through the mid-1940s. I also examine the lives and musicking of three black fiddlers (James Booker, Frank Patterson, and Joe Thompson)[5] who lived in or near the Appalachian Mountains to demonstrate how the shared culture influenced their performance style and creativity. The discussion will address several questions: When did interchanges or sharing between black and white people occur; what factors led to the sharing; where were many of these black fiddlers located; and what musical ideas did black fiddlers contribute to the tradition? Much of the information for this article is based on data collected and published by

black fiddlers. These include Alan Lomax, who recorded Bob Pratcher and Sid Hemphill; John Harrod, who recorded Bill Livers; Bobby Fulcher, who recorded Cuje Bertram; Kip Lornell who recorded Leonard Bowles and Joe Thompson; John W. Work III, who recorded Frank Patterson and others; as well as Margo Mayo, Stu Jamieson, and Freyda Simon, who recorded John Lusk. Recordings of many of these fiddlers can be found online.

4 Located in eastern North America, the Appalachian mountain range extends about 1,500 miles from Quebec, Canada, to the northern parts of Alabama and Mississippi. In the United States, the range can be divided into three regions: northern (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania); central (Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee); and southern (South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi). Because no evidence of black fiddling exists for northern Appalachia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the terms Appalachians and Appalachia, in this article, relate to central and southern Appalachia. In some sources, the two regions are regarded as one and simply referred to as southern Appalachia or the Mountain South (Dunaway 2003, Turner 1985b: 237).

5 This article is not intended to be comprehensive. Therefore, while any number of fiddlers (Cuje Bertram, Leonard Bowles, Elbert Freeman, Bill Livers, and John Lusk) could have been chosen for a profile, I decided to focus on Booker, Patterson, and Thompson because their life experiences and musicking are diverse, allowing me an opportunity to discuss a variety of issues important to this topic.

folklorists and music researchers, liner notes from recordings, and literature that include brief mention of African-American music within discussions of Anglo-American music (see References). During my field research in the late 1980s and early 2000s, I personally interviewed and/or recorded the musicking of several black fiddlers (Howard Armstrong, Leonard Bowles, Bill Driver, Joe Thompson, Rhiannon Giddens, and others) who performed or had been influenced by old-time music.

History

Although the early seventeenth century is considered the period when Africans were first transported to North America, evidence shows that many arrived much earlier. During the sixteenth century, some Africans fought with the Spaniards and French against Native American groups on the East Coast and in the Appalachian Mountains (Abernethy 1996: 1, DjeDje and Meadows 1998: 1, 16, Purdue 1985: 23-24). Enslaved Africans exported during these early periods varied in geographical origin. However, Senegambians constituted the largest group to be sold into slavery during the sixteenth century and were among the earliest African peoples to dominate statistically in the Americas[6] (Curtin 1975: 3, Diouf 1998: 4, 17-18, McCartney 2003: 8, Roberts 1998: 61).

Scholars have contrasting views on the issue of slavery in Appalachia. The general belief is that the lifestyle and culture of eastern slave owners (those who lived on the Atlantic Coast with large plantations) promoted an environment of social inequality, whereas freedom from competition in the western frontier (in the Appalachian Mountains where plantations were limited) prevented the development of a rigid socially stratified community. In recent years, not only have many researchers criticised the prevailing view of slavery in mountain culture, but several believe environmental and political factors are misplaced and do not tell the entire story about slavery.

For example, Wilma Dunaway argues that two characteristics of slavery have not been taken into account. Appalachian slavery had an adverse impact on the economic advancement of poor whites. Due to the small number of black people residing in the region, slave owners relied on a diverse workforce that included poor white and enslaved black people. The work of slaves in the region was more diverse than in other parts of the South. Not only did Appalachian slaveholders merge stores, inns, hotels, and toll gates for roads, bridges, and ferries with cotton ginning and tobacco manufacturing, which provided more work opportunities for slaves, slave owners controlled most of the region's commercial mills, distilleries, and blacksmiths. More than one-quarter of the region's black people worked as artisans, specialists, and labourers in commercial and industrial activities. With African Americans working at mineral resorts and spas in Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina, mountain black people had a variety of occupations that gave them special skills distinct from those enslaved in other parts of the south who were primarily agricultural workers. Also, the enslaved in Appalachia

[6] It is noteworthy that all of these African societies included the fiddle as part of their music culture (DjeDje 2008).

often worked alongside free labourers (white and black) in non-agricultural pursuits, causing extensive interactions between the two groups (Dunaway 2003: 74–75, 82, 242). In addition, while a small minority of white people, particularly Quakers and Germans, opposed slavery on moral, ethical, and religious grounds, other white people objected to slavery for political and economic reasons. Mountain white people, like most whites at the time, disliked the presence of black people in the region (Straw 2006: 7).

Beginning in the 1870s, industrialisation and growth in the coal mining industry had a major impact on Appalachian culture. Since Native Americans (the indigenous inhabitants of the region) had been re-located west during the long and arduous 1838 Trail of Tears, Appalachia had become primarily white by the late nineteenth century. However, the new coal mining industry needed people to bring coal to the surface, and there were not enough local Appalachian residents to fill the mine shafts, nor could outlying regions of Appalachia provide enough labourers. Therefore, Appalachian coal operators and owners began recruiting millions of workers from Europe to work in the mines (Jackson 2006: 28). In the end, three groups made up the coal mining work force: white people who had lived in the region since the early eighteenth century; recently freed black people who had lived there previously as well as those who migrated from other parts of the south after slavery; and newly arrived immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In response to the consequent cultural diversity, resentment, prejudices and stereotypes about immigrants became commonplace among white residents. Many of the new arrivals from Europe suffered not only the hardship of working in the coal mines but were also despised, and sometimes cruelly beaten or even slain by white Appalachians. In spite of this trend toward whiteness, Appalachia became home to a range of cultures and a heritage not always represented in writings about the region (Jackson 2006: 29–30, Straw 2006: 12–15).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the percentage of black people in most Appalachian counties decreased relative to white people in the first three decades of the twentieth century due to the influx of Europeans during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. For example, in 1870, black populations in the states of Kentucky and Tennessee were 17 and 26 percent, respectively. By 1930, black people constituted 9 percent of the population in Kentucky and 18 percent in Tennessee. Similar to the slave era, the small number of black people and close contact with white people resulted in a shared culture and common identity; this was distinct from regions with large numbers of black people[7] (Corbin 1985: 94-96, Laing 1985: 76–77).

Playing the fiddle had been an important performance tradition among Africans in the Americas since the seventeenth century. Many Europeans (Scots-Irish) who lived in Appalachia regarded the fiddle as an integral part of their cultural heritage. Thus, the sharing that began during the slave era continued in the late nineteenth and early

[7] Interaction between the races was not without tensions. The rise of Garveyism (in support of the political activist Marcus Garvey) in the mining fields was concomitant with the growth of the Ku Klux Klan. But generally, the socioeconomic status of blacks and whites was nearly identical, with an eventual decrease rather than an increase of race prejudice (Laing 1985: 76-77).

twentieth century, not only because of family tradition but also the physical landscape, which restricted travel and contact with outsiders. On this subject, Tony Russell (1970: 9) writes: "Neither black nor white musical traditions developed independently of the other; the races lived too close together, and each relied upon the other's support too much for any real cultural separation." Winans supports this argument (1979: 27).

Creativity: Repertoire and performance style

For the discussion of creativity, I focus on repertoire and performance style. On the subject of repertoire, Russell states: "The traditional music of the … [country people] was a repertoire shared by black and white; a common stock. Some tunes or songs might be associated with one race rather than the other, but most would have no racial connotations" (1970: 26). "The great quality of the common stock was adaptability; its great power, assimilation; it was neither black nor white, but a hundred shades of grey" (*ibid*.: 30-31). Explaining why a shared repertoire existed, Russell writes: "It is not in the nature of such songs and tunes to be segregatable, and, firm and ubiquitous though racial division may have been, they could not prevent . . . the use by blacks of white, or by whites of black material" (*ibid*.: 30).

Thomas Washington Talley (ca. 1868-1952) points out that versions of "Liza Jane", "Shortening Bread", "Cotton Eyed Joe", "Here Rattler Here", and other fiddle tunes now widespread among white people were identified with African-American culture (Milnes 1999: 97–98, Talley 1922). In fact, both Wolfe and Bastin indicate that white banjo player, singer, songwriter, and comedian, Uncle Dave Macon, born David Harrison Macon (1870–1952) and one of the early stars of the Grand Old Opry, was greatly influenced by black people although acknowledgement is rarely given (Bastin 1986: 310, Wolfe 1987: 108). What the overlap in traditions suggests, according to Wolfe, is that black and white people in Middle Tennessee shared a common song repertoire in pre-World War I. But, "it was segregated in years after the war, as both song collectors and commercial merchandisers (record companies and publishers) attempted to divide southern traditional music into Anglo and Afro categories" (Wolfe 1987: 109). Furthermore, the repertoire of many rural musicians came through the media and public performances. Therefore, even when black and white people did not personally interact, both groups enjoyed listening to the Grand Ole Opry on the radio as well as race and hillbilly recordings (Huber 2013: 49–50).

According to Russell, common stock songs can be organised in a variety of ways. Using lyrics, he suggests several thematic groupings and gives examples of songs for each: ballads of hero or antihero ("John Henry" and "Joe Turner"), gamblers ("Jack O' Diamonds" and "Honey Babe Let the Deal Go Down"), low life ("Salty Dog" and "All Night Long"), and adultery; the locomotive and themes of separation, loneliness, and homesickness ("Going Down That Road Feeling Bad"); and tender songs ("Corrine Corrina"). In addition, instrumental tunes for fiddle and the banjo "draw on a huge collection of couplets and quatrains that are nearly all interchangeable from piece to piece" (Russell 1970: 28). The majority of the tunes fall into what is known today as

country or old-time music as in, for example, "Arkansas Traveler", "Bile Them Cabbage Down", "Buffalo Gal", "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More", "Leather Britches", "Old Hen Cackle", and "Sourwood Mountain" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, Winans believes common stock songs "may be even more than two or three times Russell's list" (1979: 24). In practice, researchers have discovered that black fiddlers had a diverse repertoire. When Mike Seeger recorded Will Adam in 1953,[8] he stated the following about Adam's repertoire: "He had played for both Anglo- and African-American country dances, and his repertoire was quite broad. He played his own version of Irish tunes as well as other pieces that might be unique to his regional, rural African-American culture. He had a distinctive repertoire" (Seeger 1997: 5). From my analysis of musicking by various early twentieth century black fiddlers, I found that their repertoire can be organised into four categories: common stock (songs created in the United States that developed as a result of interactions between blacks and whites; many are mentioned in ex-slave narratives); European and European-American derived tunes; songs derived from African-American culture regionally; and original creations, specific to the performer.

The performance style that black fiddlers used when performing at events for African Americans no doubt differed from that employed when they entertained European Americans, but enough overlap also occurred to reflect borrowing and sharing between the two groups. As Chris Goertzen (2008: 7) explains, "Such occasions constituted the real beginning of the black-white musical interchange that would be so important for American music in general (and specifically for fiddling)."

While not unique to Appalachia, several characteristics help to define black fiddling during slavery. Many of the instruments were homemade and constructed from gourds similar to those used by West Africans and black people on the East Coast of the USA (Minton 1996: 299). The organisation of the ensemble included a variety of instruments and sound sources used in combination with the fiddle, comprising those that were melodic (fifes, flute, banjo, clarinet, dulcimer) and percussive (bones, tambourines, triangle, drum sticks, animals' jaw or rib bones, handclapping, and occasionally, drums). The fact that the banjo was included in the ensemble demonstrates a change from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when the plucked lute was rarely used in combination with the fiddle. A rough or raspy (percussive) sound quality, characteristic of many African music traditions, was more appealing than one that may have been clear. To enhance the preferred percussive sound quality, many African-American fiddlers inserted objects into the resonator of their instruments.[9]

Descriptions of black fiddling in the Americas by nineteenth century writers reveal there was something special in the way blacks performed to create the percussive, buzzing sound quality (or complex texture) so important to many musicians in Africa. This sound was unappreciated by white observers. Nineteenth century writers included

[8] Adam was from the Ken-Gar section of Kensington, which has a population that remains primarily African American.

[9] These conclusions are based on my analysis of the literature from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century that describes black fiddling.

such comments as –"scraping their fiddle" (Berquin-Duvallon 1806); "scrape the fiddle" (Flint 1826); "sawing violins, harsh clarinets, jingling tambarines, crashing triangles, with the occasional climax of a *base* drum, make up in quantity what is deficient in quality" (Gilman 1838); "villainous squeaking" (Foster 1850); "scraping of the fiddles attracted us" (Russell 1861); "the music that he made was wrenched from all four of the strings at once, with little regard for anything but time and noise" (Thompson 1884); and "scraped that hideous combination of banjo and violin" (Cable 1886) – which all suggests that preference for a rough sound quality continued among black fiddlers through the twentieth century. Family members of Ace Donell (1849–1927), a black fiddler born during slavery in Kentucky who became well-known for his fiddling in Monroe County, Missouri, included "the rattles from a huge rattlesnake that he had killed" inside his violin resonator. Family members who kept the instrument after his death believe he "took the violin apart to put the rattles inside and re-glued it, for there is no opening large enough to slip them through" (Marshall 2012: 133).

The use of rhythm, especially off-beat phrasing (syncopation), bended tones (blue notes), imprecise attack of pitches, and melodic ornaments also reflect an African influence. Alan Jabbour (1985, 2002: 56) notes the use of syncopation in the bowing styles of both black and white fiddlers in the Upper South, and rules out the fact that this may have been a phenomenon that came about with the advent of radio and commercial hillbilly recordings in the early 1920s. Rather, he believes that syncopation began during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Melodies produced from the bowing used by both black and white fiddlers also suggest an African influence. Similar to the word, "scrape", and its derivatives, many writers describe the bowing used by black fiddlers as "jiggly", "jiggety", "jiggy", and "sawing" – terms used to designate bowing that is anachronistic or improper. Many musicians regard the sound as crude, rough, and non-professional, and in opposition to the smooth, clearer sound that is considered acceptable and expected of Western-trained violinists (Christeson 1976, Wolfe 1981: 115). However, the prominence of these terms likely indicates deliberate efforts by black fiddlers to produce the complex timbres they preferred. From my analysis of musicking by black fiddlers, another feature is the degree to which freedom and variation are included in performances. While this may not be the case with all black fiddlers, many seem to take greater liberties in changing the form that may have been established or performed by other musicians.

Although many songs ("Arkansas Traveler", "Cackling Hen", "Leather Britches", and "Turkey in the Straw") black fiddlers played at various music events for black and white people may have been based on music from Europe or tunes developed from a shared environment (Winans 1982), the foregoing indicates that the manner in which African Americans performed the music was no doubt African-derived. Furthermore, researchers believe that many of these features have made fiddling in Appalachia as well as other parts of the southern United States distinctive (Jabbour 1985, 1996: 254-255).

Profiles of fiddlers

Black fiddlers active during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century may be grouped according to geography (state and region; rural vs urban; mountain vs. coastal); type of music they played (old-time music vs. blues, jazz, and popular); or, how the music was collected (commercial vs. field recordings). The organisation of my discussion on James Booker, Frank Patterson, and Joe Thompson is based on the time period when their recordings were made: 1920s, 1940s, and 1970s-1990s. In addition to brief details about their life history, I present information on their repertoire and performance style.

James "Jim" D. Booker, Jr. (1872–1940) is important to the history of African-American fiddling because he is not only the first rural black fiddler to make a commercial recording, but also the first to record as part of an interracial group. Booker participated in two recording sessions organised by the Gennett record label in Richmond, Indiana, with Taylor's Kentucky Boys, a predominantly white string band formed and managed by Dennis W. Taylor, a white talent scout based in the Richmond area. The first session took place in April 1927 and the second in August 1927. On 27 August, 1927, Gennett recorded two blues numbers with Booker playing fiddle as a member of the Booker Orchestra, an all-black group that included his two youngest brothers, Joe (1890–1966) and John (1892–1986), and a neighbour, Robert Steele (1882–1962).

Jim Booker was born in Jessamine County in central Kentucky. Like many performers in rural southern communities, Booker was raised in a family of musicians. While both he and his father (Jim Sr. and Jim Jr.) were fiddlers, the youngest sons, Joe and John, both played fiddle and guitar. Musically, the Booker family were a product of the shared culture that developed between black and white people during the slave era in Appalachia. In terms of repertoire, the Bookers performed songs in the four categories discussed above. Of the twelve songs Jim Booker recorded, only two ("Salty Dog" and "Camp Nelson Blues") are identified with African-American culture. The first has become common stock and the second is a tune probably created by someone locally to recognise a town important to black people in Kentucky. The fact that Booker was well versed in performing tunes record companies identified with white people may be one reason Taylor invited him to participate in the two recording sessions. To ensure the recordings reached the hillbilly market, a photo of the group appeared on the record cover without Booker. Holding the fiddle in the photo is Taylor, the white manager, even though he did not perform on the recording (see Huber 2013: 51).[10] After his last recording session in August 1927, Booker's recording career ended. It is not known if it was Booker's decision or extenuating circumstances (illness or old age) that caused him to stop making recordings. Yet, one cannot ignore the fact that the growing bias and misrepresentation in the media (race vs. hillbilly record series) may have been factors that brought Booker's recording career to a halt. Huber believes the recordings that

[10] Some researchers suggest that Booker's photo is not included because he was unavailable to sit for the photograph with his two band mates when the photo was taken (Huber 2013: 50). Yet, one might ask, why was the photograph taken when Booker was not present?

Booker "made as a member of Taylor's Kentucky Boys reveal the intertwined white and black musical traditions of south-central Kentucky. Today Booker is still renowned in that region of the state, and many of his signature tunes, some of them learned directly from him, continue to circulate there among white old-time fiddlers" (Huber 2013: 63). In the end, Booker was never acknowledged for his talent as a black fiddler.

"Forked Deer," one of the tunes Booker recorded at the first recording session in April 1927, is derived from European-American culture (Booker *et al.* 1927). Although Jabbour references many sources in documenting the tune's provenance (Jabbour 1966a), no mention is made of the 1927 recording by Taylor's Kentucky Boys. The omission is unfortunate because "Forked Deer" was one of the first old-time tunes to be commercially recorded. The version by Taylor's Kentucky Boys is the second recording of this tune to be released. Three commercial recordings of "Forked Deer" had been made before the 1927 recording session by Booker,[11] but only one – Victor's 1924 recording of "Forki Deer" by Ambrose Gaines "Uncle Am" Stuart on fiddle and Gene Austin on banjo – was released (Russell and Pinson 2004: 881, Stuart and Austin 1924). If fiddlers during the 1920s were avid listeners of the media, the recordings of "Forked Deer" by these two groups may have influenced their interpretations of the song.

To understand the uniqueness of Booker and Taylor's Kentucky Boys performance, comparing it with the first release, Victor's 1924 recording by Stuart and Austin (Russell and Pinson 2004: 881), is useful.[12] The Stuart-Austin recording, which is two minutes and twenty-three seconds in length, is distinctive for several reasons. The performance is based on three melodies (ABC), and each consists of a four-beat, eight bar melodic pattern. The fiddler begins the song with the lower-pitched melody (A) by playing it twice before moving to the higher-pitched melody (B), which is another four-beat, eight-bar pattern, played twice. While the fiddler plays the lead in the AB melodies, the banjo player accompanies lightly by repeatedly playing chords on eighth notes – one-and, two-and, three-and, four-and – without emphasis on any of the beats. Forty-four seconds into the song, the fiddler stops playing to allow the banjoist to perform C (a florid melody with the occasional interjection of chordal strums to add emphasis) alone three times. Then, the first part of the tune is repeated with some minor variations until the performance ends. A steadily moderate tempo is maintained throughout the performance, suggesting that it may have been used as a show piece for listening rather than musicking for dancing.

The 1927 Gennett recording of "Forked Deer" by Taylor's Kentucky Boys differs from Stuart and Austin's 1924 release on Victor in several ways.[13] The former includes

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11 Between 1922 and 1930, a total of seven commercial recordings were made of "Forked Deer" – three before and three after the 1927 recording by Booker and Taylor's Kentucky Boys; see Russell and Pinson (2004) for details.

12 To listen to the recording of "Forki Deer" by Stuart and Austin, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2AoUjBEHAQ [accessed 13 May 2017].

13 For a recording of "Forked Deer" by Taylor's Kentucky Boys, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIj8gbrvVMc [accessed 13 May 2017].

three performers – Jim Booker (fiddle), Marion Underwood (banjo), and Willie Young (guitar) – and is two minutes and forty-one seconds in length. The performance of 1927 is distinct for its use of only two melodies (AB); the fiddler (Booker) begins with a melodically intricate high melody (A), while the banjo player (Underwood) accompanies the fiddle by playing the basic notes of A without ornamentation. The banjoist produces a more prominent sound during B because he performs a more elaborate version of the melody (B), while the fiddler accompanies the banjo by outlining the basic notes. In texture, however, the musical relationship between the fiddle and banjo throughout the piece can be described as heterophonic. The performance of a four-note descending melody by both Booker (fiddler) and Underwood (banjoist) not only sonically marks the end of each melody but also the ending of the song. The guitarist (Young) plays chords on the "and" of each beat throughout the performance, providing a rhythmic off-beat feel that is different from steady strumming on eighth notes heard in the 1924 Stuart-Austin recording. And most importantly, the faster tempo used by Taylor's Kentucky Boys gives their performance more intensity, as if it was performed to accompany dancing instead of it being a piece for listening: "This effect is accentuated by a faint foot-stomping sound that enters the recording with the first B part" (S. Linford pers. comm. 1 December 2019).

The two recordings by Gennett (1927) and Victor (1924) are similar in that all instrumentalists contribute to the performance in a unique way. In Taylor's Kentucky Boys' performance, this is achieved collectively. While the guitarist performs a repetitive part that serves as the foundation for the piece, the fiddler and banjoist perform the main melodies. But their parts are highlighted at different points. While one is being featured, the other performs an accompanying role. In the case of Stuart-Austin, solo improvisation occurs more often where each musician is given a part to perform alone, without any accompaniment. Whereas the Stuart-Austin performance seems appropriate for a contest, the performance by Taylor's Kentucky Boys with its simpler form, faster tempo, more intricate rhythms, and Booker's intense fiddle playing is more inviting for dancing.

Most discussions of the Booker Orchestra's performance of "Salty Dog" (also known as "Salty Dog Blues") point out that it is a blues song performed by a family of black string musicians. The lyrics, when used, are often risqué (Booker Orchestra 1927). Record producer Marshall Wyatt writes: "Jim Booker also recorded two sides with his family string band … They recorded 'Salty Dog,' known among black songsters for its bawdy lyrics, although here the Bookers render an instrumental version. The three brothers display a fluid style with bluesy accents, and Steele adds a hokum touch with his kazoo. These recordings were labeled 'made for Hillbilly' in the Gennett files and marketed to a white audience" [14] (Wyatt 1999: 17–18).

[14] Hokum's origins date to nineteenth century blackface minstrelsy when it connoted slapstick comedy and buffoonery. In blues and country music, the term refers to songs with lyrics that make sexual innuendos (Wikipedia 2006). To listen to a recording of "Salty Dog" (1927) by the Booker Orchestra, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4ss4bCv04o [accessed 19 October 2019].

Although "Salty Dog" is now regarded as common stock and has been recorded by many musicians, with each using elements from blues, jazz, or country (old-time and bluegrass music) to make it their own, the song's roots are African American.[15] In my opinion, the features that most distinguish "Salty Dog" are the melody, lyrics, and chord progression. The song is based on two different four-beat, eight-bar melodic patterns with variants (ABA). While the lyrics and melody used in the first half (bars 1–4) of the eight bars tend to be varied, those in the second half (bars 5–8) are not, except for minor variations when alternating every other verse.

The Bookers' recording is the first instrumental performance of "Salty Dog." Without risqué lyrics, one might ask, what are the features that identify the song by the Booker Orchestra as "Salty Dog"? Most obvious is the performance of the four-chord cycle of fifths (VI-II-V-I), which is one of the most identifying features of the song. In addition, the fiddle melodies have been organised and performed in the style of what a vocalist might sing. The Bookers created two melodies – a low A and a high B – that did not exist in any of the previous commercial releases. In addition, the two melodies are organised in a specific pattern (AABBBB), which is repeated three times during the performance as the tempo of the music gradually increases. The first time the pattern is performed, the music has a moderate tempo (quarter note equals 104 bpm) with the fiddle and kazoo playing the A melody in unison; the guitar accompanies by using the root of the chord on the down beat and strummed chords on the off beats, very much in the style of ragtime. When the AABBBB pattern is played a second time (0:59), the tempo increases (quarter note equals 120 bpm) as the fiddler, without the kazoo, improvises on the melody with bended notes and off-beat phrasing; but the same ragtime guitar accompaniment is used. By the time the pattern is repeated the third time (1:49), the tempo has increased even more (quarter note equals 126 bpm). Although the fiddle and kazoo perform in unison as before, there is much more variation and driving intensity in the performance of both musicians during the performance of the third pattern. Contributing to the intensity is a second fiddler performing a more elaborate version (counter melody) of B. In many ways, the collective improvisation by all performers (of the Booker Orchestra) in the final repeat of the pattern is similar to that used in many jazz ensembles.

[15] In 1938, black jazz pianist Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941) states that he recalls a three-piece band led by William "Bill" Johnson (1872–1972), an African American who was the founder and leader of the Original Creole Orchestra, playing "Salty Dog" to great acclaim before 1910 (Morton and Lomax 1938). Five commercial recordings had been made of "Salty Dog" before Gennett recorded the Booker Orchestra in August 1927. The first three releases were by African Americans who had established careers performing blues and jazz – Charlie Jackson (1924), Clara Smith (1926), and Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals (1926) – while the next two recordings were made by European Americans known for their performance of old-time music – the Allen Brothers (1927) and the McGee Brothers (1927) (Dixon, Godrich, and Rye 1997, Russell and Pinson 2004). The 1924 release by Jackson included singing with risqué lyrics that served as the basis for song texts used by subsequent performers, both black and white. The lyrics for Jackson's first verse of are: "Won't you let me be your salty dog/Don't want to be your man at all/Salty dog; you, salty dog." To see the remaining lyrics, go to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salty_Dog_Blues [accessed September 18, 2020].

Commenting on the performance style used by the Booker Orchestra, Scott Linford, who specialises in performing fiddle and banjo old-time music, states: “I hear more sliding into notes, more flatted sevenths, and a half-flatted third. That harmonic progression sounds more like jazz or ragtime or a jug band beat. With the kazoo, it sounds more like a jug band. This would have been music for dancing. So, you wouldn't want to speed up too much. Then having played with a lot of old-time bands, I know that you always do have a tendency to speed up, just because you get carried away with the energy. It may mean that they got really into what they were doing and started speeding up” (Interview 4 September 2013). From this analysis, one can make general statements, although they are tentative until additional tunes are examined. The performance by the Booker Orchestra is distinct for fusing elements that have been historically identified with African-American culture. Although elements such as instrumentation (banjo, kazoo) and performance techniques (off-beat phrasing, bended notes), associated with African Americans and adopted by European Americans, are apparent, the record companies market it as a hillbilly recording, most likely because of the fiddle. This is an excellent example of misrepresentation, for if similar characteristics had been included in a performance of saxophone, cornet, and clarinet, most record companies would have placed it in the race record series and marketed it to a black audience. What seems apparent about Booker as a fiddler is that his musicking is intense. In his performance of “Forked Deer” and “Salty Dog”, he performs as if he is in context, that is, performing music for dancing. In both cases, the music is straightforward in form, but the melody and rhythm are more involved. As the leader, he gives opportunities for others to be featured and seems to encourage collective variation, which suggests that he does not mind sharing the musical spotlight.

Frank Patterson (1872–1950) was born in Rutherford County in Middle Tennessee and died in Nashville. He was the second of six children. No information is available on whether his parents or siblings were musicians. However, family members state that, although Patterson was most well-known for his fiddling, he also played the banjo. His wife and three sons were instrumentalists, who played guitar, piano, mandolin, and banjo, but there is no evidence they played together as a family music group (Y. Rowser pers. comm. 21 May 2018). Patterson learned most of his fiddle repertoire from an older black fiddler around 1900. Soon after, Patterson began leading his own band and playing breakdowns at local dances with banjo players and guitarists. Around 1916, he left Rutherford County to work on a farm about thirteen miles southeast of Nashville where he performed with local musicians at house dances. Sometime in the late 1930s, Patterson moved to Nashville, where he worked as a yard labourer, in addition to performing his music (Wolfe 1989).

In April 1941, Patterson and banjo player, Nathan Frazier, were invited to perform at the 75th anniversary celebration of the founding of Fisk University by John W. Work III, a black music professor at the university. Wolfe indicates that both were established musicians in the Nashville area during that period, and had played together before their performance at Fisk, most often for square dances with white dancers and white

callers. The performance at Fisk must have been successful, for in 1942, Work recorded several tunes of Patterson and Frazier performing together, recordings now held in the Library of Congress. No doubt the songs that Patterson and Frazier recorded for Work do not include their entire repertoire but represent what the musicians believed was appropriate for the occasion. Nevertheless, the provenance of the tunes reveals a diverse repertory typical of black string band musicians during the early twentieth century. Of the eleven songs that include Patterson on fiddle, four are unique to Patterson and/or African-American culture (play-party songs), whereas about half are Patterson and Frazier's versions of common stock and/or European-derived tunes dating to the nineteenth century and earlier (Patterson and Frazier 1989, 1999).[16]

When Patterson performs songs from the European repertoire, characteristics identified with African-American music tend not to be highlighted. At two minutes and twenty-seven seconds in length, Patterson's version of "The Eighth of January" is based on three melodies (ABC) organised into three sections that begin and end at the following times: section one (0:00–0:47), section two (0:48-1:36), and section three (1:37–2:27). Unlike other black musicians who tend to increase the tempo as they progress through the performance, probably in reaction to the dancers' movements or their personal response to the musicking, the duple rhythm and tempo performed by Patterson and Frazier remain steady throughout. From my analysis, the three melodies have different functions in the performance. The most distinctive is the sixteen-beat A melody played in a high pitch register organised with large intervals and descending melodic lines; it serves as the introduction and marker that divides the song into three sections. Melody B, consisting of eight beats, is performed in a lower pitch range (about an octave below A), and used as a transition to the melody that follows it. Melody C's simple construction (also in a low pitch register), with many repeated notes and melodic motives with small intervals, is the place where singing and more extensive melodic variation occurs. Because B and C are melodically similar, one could argue that C is a variant of B. Although Patterson is the leader, for he seems to be the one who decides when to change to a different section or melody, his performance is more reserved than the intense, vibrant playing style used by Frazier. Overall the performance is contained with minimal variation in form, melody, or rhythm. Linford (Interview 1 May 2013) states the following about Patterson's performance of "The Eighth of January"[17]: "That's a great recording that sounds like classical old-time music. It's not about the chord progression; it's about the way the melody of the A part and melody of the B part fit together – the melodic contrast from the higher A part and the lower B part. Also, there is heterophonic interplay between the fiddle and the banjo. The fiddling could have

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[16] Work's field recordings of Patterson and Frazier have been published on a variety of recordings. *Altamont* (1989), the first commercial release of field recordings by several black fiddlers that had been deposited in the Library of Congress, *Black Fiddlers* (1999), and *John Work, III: Recording Black Culture* (2008) are just three examples.

[17] A recording of "Eighth of January" by Patterson and Frazier is available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzbcivaJtc4 [accessed 6 November 2019].

been a white fiddler or a black fiddler. There was nothing cultural or racially distinctive about it. There was a little bit cleaner fiddling, not too many double stops, moderate amount of ornamentation in terms of the melody."

By comparison, a much freer performance style is used in Patterson's "Po' Black Sheep," a tune unique to the performer.[18] Instead of playing melodies in unison or heterophonically, polyphony is emphasized and more dialogue (call and response) occurs between the fiddle and banjo. At three minutes and sixteen seconds in length, "Po' Black Sheep" is based on two melodies (AB) with variations that can be divided into four sections. Similar to "The Eighth of January," the sixteen-beat A melody is the most stable and melodically complex theme. Performed in a higher pitch range with large intervals and descending melodic lines, A stands out from B, which is about one octave lower. While A may be interesting for its soaring lyrical melody, B is noteworthy for its varying structure and singing by Frazier. Although based on eight beats, the B melody is not set, but is composed of different four-beat melodic units that are combined and developed in various ways. While the first part of B (the call) is often varied, the second part (the response) tends to be more fixed (especially on beat 4). In the first appearance of the B melody in section one, which is repeated three times, what stands out is the performance of an intricate melodic passage that includes the sixth note of the scale. However, in the second and third performance of B, the call consists of the fiddler playing a sustained note (B^1) and then repeating an octave of the same note several times (B^2). In the fourth performance of the B melody, the call (B^3) consists of the fiddler repeating the melody twice without any variation.[19] It is also significant that although the response for each of the calls (B, B^1, B^2, and B^3) may vary somewhat in the beginning, the response always ends with a eighth note motive consisting of a major third (A flat and C). In my opinion, the eighth note is a marker that Patterson uses to close both the A melody as well as different versions of the B melody. In addition to employing a more flexible structure and polyphony (in A, B^1, and B^2), several features such as changes in volume (melody B tends to be softer than melody A), use of off-beat rhythms (in A and B), and use of call and response between the fiddle and banjo in developing melodies, provide the performance greater intensity, energy and excitement. Listening to Patterson play "Po' Black Sheep" in this manner helps one to understand why his admirers liked this piece.

Joseph Aquilla Thompson (1918–2012) was born in Mebane, North Carolina. Thompson's musicking demonstrates what happened to mountain music when it was taken from the Appalachian core and adopted by blacks and whites in nearby piedmont regions with larger black populations. Similar to Booker, Thompson was born into a family of musicians with elders, siblings, and cousins playing a variety of instruments. Unlike family members who played several instruments, Joe only played the fiddle,

[18] A recording of "Po' Black Sheep" by Patterson and Frazier is available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjFML1I0ebs [accessed 6 November 2019].

[19] The time for the first performance of the B melody starts at 0.15, while the second, third, and fourth performances begin at roughly 0.27, 0:31, and 0:34, respectively.

which he learned when he was about five years old. Joe learned to play the fiddle by observing and imitating his elders and siblings who continued to play at dances or frolics through the early 1940s. He states: "This thing [fiddling] come from . . . [what] my grand-daddy started, then my daddy; it comes from the 1700s all the way down to here" (see also Chapman 2004). When Joe returned from the army in 1945, he discovered that family members had stopped performing because the musical tastes of those who once patronised their music had changed. Joe's music might have been lost forever had not Christopher "Kip" Lornell located him and his cousin Odell, a banjo player, in 1973 and encouraged them to perform again (Summers 2000).[20] This encouragement led to a new musical career for Joe, with recordings, awards, tributes, and performances in festivals and other events throughout the United States and abroad. During the early 2000s, he became a musical mentor and partner to young African-American musicians who achieved renown as a group called the Carolina Chocolate Drops. Yet, it is significant that this occurred when both the performance and interest in fiddling by most black people in the United States had declined to its lowest degree (Martin 2012, Thompson 1978a, 1978b, 1989, 1998, 1999, Thompson *et al*. 2008, J. Thompson interview 21 August 1987, Wikipedia 2009).

During my interviews with Joe and Odell in 1987, I asked them about the type of music they performed; Joe stated: "We play the same thing my father played when I was little seeing him play. Most everything we play comes from my daddy and his daddy" (Interview 21 August 1987). Similar to other southern, rural African-American fiddlers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, songs that Thompson performed were diverse. Except for one tune, "Dona's Got a Rambling Mine," possibly an original creation by Joe's father, who played the fiddle, the songs Joe performed consisted of selections shared by black and white people (Carlin 1999, Conway 1990: 76, Lornell 1975: 31). Several are common stock but are also mentioned in ex-slave narratives, and at least five evolved from the music culture of African Americans in the southeast.

Black fiddlers in these communities had opportunities to perform for varied audiences: all black, all white, and mixed. Regardless of the context, they used a performance style that was African-derived; thus, most black fiddling in the region tended to be abrasive, vigorous, and with an energetic quality. Musicians seemed to prefer a certain tonality. North Carolina folklorist Wayne Martin, who is also a banjo player, explains: "Before they [Joe and Odell] would play, they would be tuning up. . .. I guess modern musicians would call it running the scale. We were doing that one day and I noticed that every time he [Joe] did it, he'd play the third note of the scale and flattened it, unlike the white musicians that I play with. And in a lot of the tunes they [Joe and Odell] play, that note is flattened. A lot of people think of that as a characteristic of blues. But in fact, it's probably older than blues" (see also Chapman 2004).

[20] Lornell was a student in Greensboro, North Carolina, when he visited the Thompsons' home in fall 1973 to learn about Joe and Odell's involvement in performing old-time music (Lornell 2013).

To demonstrate characteristics of Joe's performance style, I have analysed two songs– "Old Joe Clark" and "Georgia Buck" – that he and Odell "recorded in North Carolina between January, 1974, and June, 1976" (Lornell 1978, Thompson 1978a).[21] Although researchers believe "Old Joe Clark" dates to the nineteenth century, Jabbour (1966b) states that "one cannot find sets older than the turn of the [twentieth] century." Performed in the key of G major with a performance time of roughly two minutes and fifteen seconds, Joe and Odell's playing of "Old Joe Clark" is typical of most old-time music tunes. After the beginning of the song with Joe singing the lyrics, "Old Joe Clark killed a man, buried him in the sand," twice in a slow free rhythm and no instrumental accompaniment, Joe and Odell quickly start playing at a brisk pace (quarter note equals 132 bpm) that is maintained through the song's ending. In their performance, Joe and Odell vary the AB structure (low pitch A melody and high pitch B melody). Instead of repeating the AB pattern twice with equal attention given to both melodies, as performed by many musicians (Jabbour 1966b), Joe and Odell's performance allows for the A melody to dominate. Not only do they sometimes play A three times before moving to B, they end the song with A and no performance of B. Thus, the form of their performance is: AABB | AAABB | AAABB | AA. Sule Greg Wilson, a percussionist noted for his playing of old-time music, states that Joe played the tune in a manner typical of many musicians, especially those who are African Americans. When some musicians "get into a groove with the dancers, they prefer not to switch back to the other part until it feels right" (S.G. Wilson interview, 3 October 2013). Joe uses a shuffling rhythm in playing the fiddle melody heterophonically with the banjo, and only once in the performance does he use double stops. Although Joe occasionally includes some off-beat phrasing and bends the third note of the scale as he plays the melody, these characteristics are not used often in this performance.

"Georgia Buck" is a "widely known African-American song" popular in both black and white traditions in Piedmont North Carolina (Carlin 1999, Conway 1998: 13). The fact that Joe included it on most, if not all of his recordings (see Thompson 1978a, 1978b, 1989, 1998, 1999, Thompson *et al* 2008) suggests that it was regularly performed by members of the Thompson family and possibly developed by local musicians. Joe and Odell's performance of "Georgia Buck" differs from "Old Joe Clark" in several ways. At three minutes and fifteen seconds in length, "Georgia Buck" is longer, and singing is more prominent – first by Joe who, during the first fourteen seconds, introduces the song with the lyrics: "Oh, the Georgia Buck is dead. Um, last word he said, 'Don't you let a woman have her way.' Georgia Buck is dead." Starting at (0:21), Odell begins singing the lyrics intermittently throughout the rest of the song.

Unlike "Old Joe Clark," which is based on two distinct melodies (AB), "Georgia Buck" is composed of one sixteen beat (four-beat, four bar) melody that is repeated throughout the piece with variations. In this performance, the use of bended notes, especially thirds and sevenths, as well as off-beat phrasing is prominent. Although Joe's

[21] To my knowledge, these earliest recordings are not available online.

fiddle melody is performed heterophonically with the banjo, polyphony sometimes occurs (1:26-1:56) when Joe uses thirty-second notes instead of playing the melody with quarter, eighth, or sixteenth notes to create greater intensity. The performance reaches a climax toward the end (3:03) when both performers increase the tempo (quarter note equals 138bpm) and develop the melody with more improvisation that results in a more highly involved polyphonic sound.

Interestingly, Joe and Odell also use volume as an element for variation. During the first part of the performance, Joe performs softly to such a degree that his fiddling is barely heard above Odell's singing and banjo playing (0:21-0:45 and 1:02-1:26). It is during these parts that it sounds as if the banjo is leading with the fiddle playing a more supporting role. During the interludes or sections when there is no singing (0:46-1:01), Joe performs more loudly, but still without much intensity. However, when the singing ends (2:11), Joe begins improvising by playing the melody more intricately (using thirty-second notes as noted in the above) and with a louder volume. As he performs with greater intensity (3:01), the tempo is also increased (quarter note equals 138bpm). At this point, Joe uses harmonics to produce a high-pitched, screechy (or scratchy) sound; then, they both perform the last four beats of the sixteen-beat melody three times. Either this was a way to indicate to each other that the song is about to come to an end, or it is a climactic moment before the entire melody (sixteen beats) is played one last time.

Although performances of only two tunes have been examined, it is apparent that Joe's performance style varies and seems to depend on context, the tune, and the musician(s) with whom he is performing. Because these two music examples are based on tunes from his early recording career with a family member who knew the tradition of his ancestors, one may conclude that the musicking is similar to what it may have been during the early twentieth century. It is significant that when compared with other performers discussed in this essay, commonalities exist. Not only is Joe's use of bended notes (that is, flatted thirds and sevenths) similar to that of fiddlers in Kentucky and Tennessee, his shuffling, percussive style in performing the melody is comparable to that used by many Appalachian black fiddlers. In fact, Linford (4 September 2013) states:

> Leonard Bowles' [a Virginia black fiddler] style and Joe Thompson and Odell Thompson's style, that's what I think of as being the African-American old time style. The rougher timbre, that sawing, where the fiddler is focusing on the bowing aspect of it; not a complex, ornate melody and a lot of pentatonic sort of melodies. I would even add that the interaction between the fiddle and banjo is similar. That pairing, the heterophony is a really strong awareness of what the other person is going to do to produce a single sound between the two instruments.

This example demonstrates that Joe employs a more reserved performance style when playing "Old Joe Clark," a piece identified with European culture, probably because the song's structure fits this aesthetic. However, a more involved and improvisatory performance style is used in the African-based tune, "Georgia Buck," because the simple, straight-forward formal structure allows for greater freedom and variation.

Conclusion

African-American fiddlers have had a long history in Appalachia that dates to the seventeenth century. Fiddling in the region is not based solely on European ideas, but a confluence of features that are both African- and European-derived. While the merging of traditions is not unique, the shared culture of black and white people influenced the development of a sound identified with Appalachia that has received only cursory attention from various scholars (DjeDje 2016, Huber 2013). This essay demonstrates that close interactions between the races in the Appalachian Mountains during slavery and much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, due to the physical environment, economics, social conditions, and possibly other factors, contributed to the development and prominence of black fiddling in the region. But it is also noteworthy that elements identified with African and African-American musicking, including off-beat phrasing, bended notes, a greater emphasis on percussion and other features, played a major role in the creation of a performance style unique to Appalachian black fiddling.

This essay demonstrates that fiddling was an important and thriving tradition among black and white people in several parts of the southern United States during the first half of the twentieth century. In other words, the shared tradition that began among both groups before the nineteenth century apparently continued in many rural communities through the mid-twentieth century. Fiddling was not maintained solely in rural areas where white people greatly outnumbered black people, but also in rural areas of the South where large numbers of African Americans resided. Thus, it is a tradition that should not be excluded or ignored but embraced as part of both African- and European-American cultures.

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