

Hello everyone!

Recap 9/8/22

Last week Logan Hone joined us to share all things banjo! Logan is a multi-instrumentalist musician, educator, and music lover who currently teaches at Neighborhood Music School in Los Angeles. He also leads an all-skill-levels Community Band every Saturday at Hermon Park, which you all are invited to! The flyer is attached below.

We learned that the banjo consists of a drumhead, around a drum or a gourd; a neck, like a guitar or violin; and drone strings. Usually the 5th string is never “noted.” According to Wiki, “The modern banjo derives from instruments that have been recorded to be in use in North America and the Caribbean since the 17th century by enslaved people taken from West and Central Africa. Many enslaved Africans would bring instruments with them to the Americas and the Caribbean. Written references to the banjo in North America and the Caribbean appear in the 17th and 18th century. The instrument became increasingly available commercially from around the second quarter of the 19th century due to minstrel performances.” The following are some examples of instruments similar to the banjo in sound.

Akonting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbxk3oulOf4>

Kora: <https://youtu.be/QtiTfejYpgs?t=738>

With the invention of the minstrel banjo, came minstrel shows, serving as the pop music of the 19th century. The shows featured white performers, and eventually black performers, performing a theatrical show consisting of racist songs, dances, and comedy in blackface.

A brief history of blackface and its racist underpinnings can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/pqID-eZm1ck?t=54>

An example of a performance in blackface with the banjo can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYWmBaVcNYg>

Throughout the 19th century, the banjo continued to spread through the United States. Some notable time periods and associated artists are listed below.

Clawhammer: (Classic era, 1880s-1910s)

Clarence Ashley: <https://youtu.be/VwIOO8RG-og?t=210>

New lost city Ramblers: https://youtu.be/SZIT_5G2pK0?t=1514

Ragtime era (1895–1919) and Jazz Age era (1910s–1930s)

Eddie Peabody: St Louis Blues <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KESgZT4aYSA>

Hal Kemp Band w Eddie Peabody: <https://youtu.be/Ulz3Dxz2Xv8?t=552>

Bluegrass:

Earl Scruggs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8wZ8U5wQi0>

Modern Fusion

Bela Fleck: <https://youtu.be/UoLXtj0aCiM?t=52>

Logan also shared some of his personal history with the banjo. He first became interested in the instrument when he saw Jerron Paxton play in 2015. The following is a performance by Jerron.

Jerron Paxton: Texas Traveler: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l25hzWCgsu0>

After this artist spurred his initial interest, Logan started playing on the banjo, exploring experimental and original material. Along the way, Logan met Caleb Finch, the fiddler in the Iron Mountain String Band, who helped make recordings for Folkways. He introduced Logan to clawhammer banjo and soon after Logan started learning and transcribing Caleb's recordings.

Throughout the hour, Logan played a variety of songs for us including: Arkansas Traveler, Cluck Old Hen, and Polly Put the Kettle On. Below are some recordings of Logan Playing the banjo.

Logan playing "Polly Put the Kettle On": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzmZiXigbRA>

Logan's album "Imaginings on Old-Time Banjo":
<https://loganhone.bandcamp.com/album/imaginings-on-old-time-banjo>

CI Music Hour This Thursday 9/15/22

This week we will have a music hour to ourselves! We will begin the hour with a musical activity. Then, we will let some of our newer members introduce themselves. This will be followed by large and/or small group conversation regarding recent musical challenges, accomplishments, and any other topics the group would like to discuss.

See you all later this week!