



MUSIC GREATS OF NORTH CAROLINA

by Elizabeth Carlson, Ed.M. for Carolina Music Ways

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Salem Band

Tommy Jarrell

Blind Boy Fuller

John Coltrane

Shirley Caesar

Doc Watson

“5” Royales

Nina Simone

INTRODUCTION

Did you know that **some of the most influential musicians in American history** are from North Carolina? These musical giants have significantly **influenced today’s popular music**.

In the assembly show *Carolina Live!—Our Musical History*, some of our state’s best current-day musicians perform songs by North Carolina music greats, whose names are in orange above.



SALEM BAND - Moravian

In 1766, the Moravians established the town of Salem. One day in 1791, George Washington came to visit. He was greeted by the town’s brass band, the Salem Band.



The Salem Band also played a very important role during the Civil War. In 1862, about ten members of the Salem Band joined a group of soldiers from North Carolina.



This famous army band was called the **26th North Carolina Regimental Band**. They provided the soldiers with entertainment. The band played as the soldiers traveled through woods and fields, at the camps where they pitched their tents, and before and after battles, including the Battle of Gettysburg.



The Salem Band is the longest continuously performing mixed-wind ensemble in the United States. It still performs in Winston-Salem.

LEARN MORE

Salem Band: <https://www.facebook.com/SalemBandFan/>

26th North Carolina Regimental Band: <https://tapsbugler.com/short-history-of-the-26th-north-carolina-regimental-band%E2%82%AC%A2%BF/>

LISTEN! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGUeqMmKhFo>



TOMMY JARRELL (1901 – 1985) – Old-Time Stringband



Photo by David Holt

A famous old-time stringband musician from North Carolina was Tommy Jarrell. Jarrell was from the Round Peak community of Surry County. He lived there all his life.

Jarrell played the banjo and the fiddle. His fiddle is now in Washington, D.C. at the Smithsonian Institute. In 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded him the National Heritage Fellowship.



During the folk revival of the 1960s and '70s, musicians came from across the country and world to learn to play the old tunes from Jarrell. He was a great host who welcomed visitors and taught them his Round Peak playing style. It was fast, hard driving and sounded like it came from a long time ago. Visiting musicians loved the man and his music, enjoying the camaraderie of other young visiting musicians, as well as Jarrell's local family and friends.



Some visitors stayed in the area, such as Debbie Gitlin, fiddler in *Carolina Live!—Our Musical History*. She moved to North Carolina decades ago from Cleveland, Ohio, to meet and learn from Tommy Jarrell, a truly one-of-a-kind North Carolina music master.

LEARN MORE

<https://www.blueridgeheritage.com/artist/tommy-jarrell/>

LISTEN!: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuoVaqK4fPM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rbcj-n3QecQ>

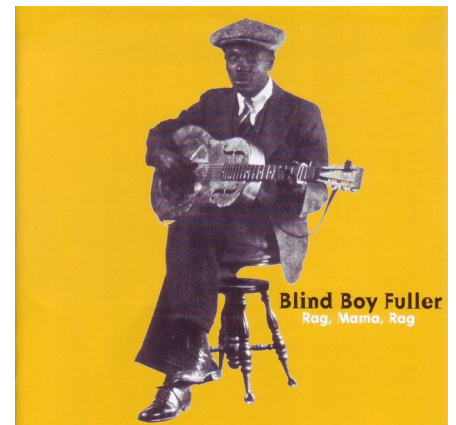
VISIT! <https://www.surryarts.org/shows/tommyjarrell.html>

www.surrycountymusic.com/category/earle-exhibits



BLIND BOY FULLER (1907 – 1941) – Piedmont Blues

Beginning in the early 1900s, blues singers began to perform in downtowns with tobacco markets, including Winston-Salem and Durham. During the 1930s, a blues musician named Blind Boy Fuller played his guitar there during busy tobacco auction time. Some people consider Blind Boy

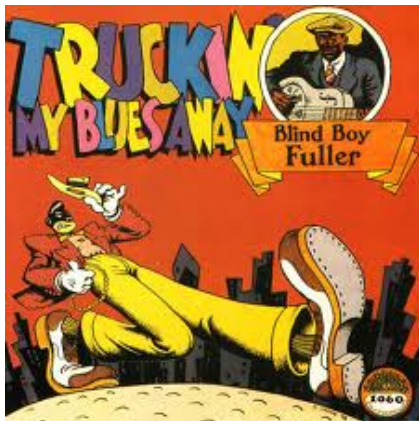




Fuller the most influential and popular Piedmont-style blues player of all time.

Blind Boy Fuller's recording career was from about 1935 – 1941, the year he died.

During the 1930s, he sold thousands of records. He recorded a variety of styles, including blues, ragtime, and the popular music of the day.



Audiences loved Fuller's singing and lyrics. His voice was strong and had a lot of feeling. His lyrics were often funny, but not always wholesome. Many of his songs contained "adult content," in which seemingly innocent sounding lyrics would actually mean something more R-rated. Some people did not approve of these songs, like some people today do not like their children listening to rap and hip-hop.

Most of his adult life, Fuller lived in Durham. He visited Winston-Salem regularly and lived there for while. Historians believe he lived at 7th and Chestnut Street, very near the tobacco warehouses, an area that today is a downtown Arts District.

LEARN MORE

<http://blues.about.com/od/artistprofil2/p/BlindBoyFuller.htm>

LISTEN!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJNlYMpcsF4>



JOHN COLTRANE (1926- 1967) – Jazz

John Coltrane is considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time. He lived in Highpoint, North Carolina, from age two months through high school. He died over forty years ago, but his music is still heard in movies, on the radio, and on TV.



Coltrane is famous for playing the saxophone. He started playing it in high school. After graduation, he moved to Philadelphia and later New York City. Playing the saxophone became Coltrane's career. From the mid 1940s through the 1950s, he played with big bands and small ones, performing in nightclubs, ballrooms, and concert halls around the country.

After playing the saxophone in a variety of bands that were led by some of the biggest names in jazz, in 1960, Coltrane formed his own jazz quartet. Coltrane and his quartet liked to experiment with all kinds of musical sounds from around the world. Some were soft, slow, and beautiful, while others were loud, fast, and shocking. His group recorded many popular records, including "My Favorite Things" and "A Love Supreme."



LEARN MORE

<http://www.johncoltrane.com>

VIDEO!: <https://northcarolinamusichalloffame.org/inductee-item/john-coltrane/>

LISTEN!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03juO5oS2gg>

VISIT!: <https://coltranejazzfest.com/>; also the Coltrane exhibit at the High Point Museum



SHIRLEY CAESAR (1938 –) – Gospel

Shirley Caesar's singing career has spanned six decades. Often referred to as the "Queen of Gospel," she is one of the most influential and famous gospel

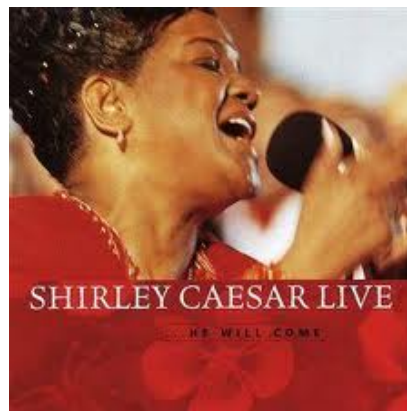




performers of all time. She was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, where she still lives.

Caesar is an eleven-time Grammy Award winner. She began singing publically at age ten and recorded her first song at age thirteen. Since then, she has made over forty albums.

Caesar was a member of the famous gospel group, the Caravans. In 1966, she formed her own group. Over the years, she has performed all over the United States and the world to adoring fans.



Caesar has strong connections to Winston-Salem. She came to the city regularly as a girl to worship and perform in her uncle's church, the Kimberly Park Holiness Church.

LEARN MORE: <https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/shirley-caesar>
VIDEOS! <https://northcarolinamusichalloffame.org/inductee-item/shirley-caesar/>



DOC WATSON (1923 – 2012) - **Bluegrass**

Doc Watson was born in Deep Gap, North Carolina, where he lived throughout his life. Before his first birthday, he went blind. He came from a very musical family and community, and, from an early age, played the banjo and guitar.





Watson grew up to become one of the world's most gifted folk guitarists. He played many musical styles, including bluegrass, old-time stringband, blues, gospel, and early country. Musically, he is best known for playing mountain fiddle tunes on the guitar. An eight-time Grammy award winner, in 1997, he received the National Medal of Arts.

Watson viewed music as a bridge that brought different groups of people together. During the folk music revival of the 1960s and '70s, he became hugely popular and performed all over the country and the world. Until his death in 2012, he remained popular with audiences both old and young.

In memory of his beloved son, Merle, Watson began MerleFest, the bluegrass/Americana festival that attracts over tens of thousands of people each spring to Wilkesboro, not far from Doc's hometown of Deep Gap.. MerleFest brings together bluegrass and Americana music fans from around the country and world to celebrate Watson and his enduring legacy.

LEARN MORE

<http://www.docsguitar.com>

VIDEO!: <https://northcarolinamusicHalloffame.org/inductee-item/doc-watson/>

VISIT!: <https://merlefest.org/>



“5” ROYALES – Rhythm and Blues

The “5” Royals from Winston-Salem were a pioneering rhythm and blues (R&B) vocal group. They were one of the most talented and innovative groups of their time. In 2015, they were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

During the “5” Royals' career from 1952 to 1965, they recorded more than one hundred songs and five top-ten





R&B hits. At least two of the group’s songs have become American classics—
“Dedicated to the One I Love” and “Think.”

The “5” Royales had a big influence on famous soul and rock and roll stars of the 1960s and '70s. “5” Royales’ guitarist, Lowman Pauling (1926-1973), often wore a long strap and played the guitar at knee-level. His creative, original playing style influenced rock superstar Eric Clapton and soul guitarist Steve Cropper.



The “5” Royales’ lead singer, John Tanner (1926 – 2005), sang with strong feeling in a down-to-earth, gospel singing style. The “5” Royales’ singing style had a big influence on later music greats, such as Stevie Wonder, Prince, and Bruno Mars.



LEARN MORE:

<https://www.rockhall.com/inductees/5-royales>

VIDEOS!:

<https://northcarolinamusichalloffame.org/inductee-item/the-five-royales/>



NINA SIMONE (1933 – 2003) – **Rhythm and Blues, Soul, and More**



Nina Simone grew up in Tryon, in the North Carolina mountains. She played many types of music, including classical, blues, and jazz. A Grammy award winning musician who in 2018 was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, she was considered one of America’s most original and talented performers.



Nina Simone was a musical genius who started playing piano at age three. Thanks to money raised by townsfolk, Simone took piano lessons. From her teacher, an Englishwoman named “Miss Mazzie,” Simone learned to play classical music. She wanted to become the first African American classical pianist.

When Simone was twelve, she gave her first piano recital. Before it started, her parents were asked to give up their seats in the front row, so a white couple could sit there. When Simone saw this, she stood up and refused to play until her parents were allowed to return to their seats.



A strong student, Nina spent high school at an African American girls boarding school in nearby Asheville. While there, she studied piano with a music teacher named Clemens Sandresky. He would later move to Winston-Salem, where for many decades he served as the dean of music at Salem College.

Nina Simone, after graduating high school valedictorian and spending a summer studying music at Julliard in New York, applied to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. She was rejected. The school judged her by her skin color, not her talent.

Nina never forgot the sting of that rejection, but she made the best of it. To earn money, she performed at a nightclub in Atlantic City, playing popular songs on the piano and singing. She soon moved to New York City, where she became a star.

During the 1950s and 60s, Nina Simone was an activist in the Civil Rights Movement. Her songs inspired people at freedom marches and rallies. Her songs “Mississippi Goddam” and “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” two of the movement’s most popular anthems.



Later in life, Nina Simone moved from New York City overseas, and lived in many countries, including in the Caribbean, Africa and Europe. She lived her final years in the South of France. Upon her death, she was mourned worldwide for her courageous activism and her music that had earned her the nickname, the “High Priestess of Soul.”

LEARN MORE: <http://www.Simonesimone.com/>

VIDEOS!: <https://northcarolinamusicchalloffame.org/inductee-item/Simone-simone/>



Elizabeth Carlson, Ed.M. wrote this document. The founder and Curriculum Director of Carolina Music Ways, Carlson holds a BA in English and American Studies from Princeton University and an Ed.M. in Language and Literacy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. A resident of Winston-Salem, she is also the author of North Carolina String Music Masters: Old-Time and Bluegrass Legends.

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<https://moravianmusic.org/resources/the-26th-nc-regiment-band-from-salem/>

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Tommy Jarrell photo by David Holt, courtesy www.DavidHolt.com

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Tommy Jarrell photo by Robert Merritt, courtesy of the Southern Folklife Collection, the Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Page 4:

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Doc Watson photo by Dan Seeger, courtesy of the Southern Folklife Collection, the Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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<http://ninasimoneproject.org/archives.htm>

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