

Adam Hurt: Getting Back to Earth

Getting Back to Earth: Adam Hurt

by Susan Marquez

(feature photo by Martin Tucker)

Although his parents were classical musicians, Adam Hurt was smitten by the sounds he heard when his fourth-grade music teacher introduced his class to the sounds of old-time and traditional instruments. “I grew up listening to my parents play, and they had me in piano lessons from an early age, but when I heard the sound of those instruments, it captivated me.”

Adam was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, not exactly the cradle of old-time and bluegrass music.

“My father was a professor of violin and he taught private lessons in our home. He also played with the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra for 40 years.”

Adam’s father passed away eleven years ago, and his mother was, and still is, a skilled pianist. Adam learned much musically from his parents, but it was in watching his dad teach music lessons that he realized he would like to teach. “Today I make most of my living teaching lessons.”

That fourth-grade music teacher was instrumental in Adam’s introduction to instruments that sounded so different from the classical music he was accustomed to hearing. He began playing the mandolin, taking lessons from his music teacher after school, and learning from a local bluegrass artist.



The banjo had the melody of a mandolin, yet it had a rhythmic quality that made it self-supporting. "It was like everything was wrapped up on one magical musical package," he says. "I put down the mandolin and played banjo throughout junior high and most of high school until I picked up the fiddle towards the end of high school. I have been learning to play old-time fiddle for the past twenty years! I don't think a musician ever stops learning,"

Despite classical music being the preferred musical genre for Adam's parents, he says they were always supportive of his interest in old-time and bluegrass music. "My parents took me to small bluegrass festivals around Minnesota, but when they took me to Clifftop in West Virginia, I got a real taste for what was waiting for me." Adam went on to become a respected performer and teacher, conducting fiddle and banjo workshops around the country and abroad. He also placed or won most major old-time banjo competitions, including three first-place

finishes at Clifftop.

After graduating from high school, Adam moved to North Carolina, supposedly to attend college.

“That wasn’t really for me. I figured out other ways to live my life and pay the bills. I needed to be in that part of the country that spawned the music I loved so much.” He now resides in Danville, Virginia.

Adam began teaching music lessons in 2008. “In the early years, it was in-person lessons, but as time went on, I realized I could have a broader student base if I took my lessons online. I was one of the first to embrace video lessons via Skype. It has enabled me to make a good living doing a very niche thing, and I’m not limited to one market. Over the years, I’ve built a very robust roster of students.”

Pre-COVID, Adam taught at several music camps throughout the year, which always included an instructor concert.

“Sadly, that has not been the case this year due to the pandemic, but because I was already established as an online music instructor, that part of my business has flourished. During COVID times, I reflect daily on my good fortune. I hope that even as some of my colleagues struggle to reinvent ways of working to replicate gigs, that we can all learn to diversify.”

adam hurt &
beth williams
hartness



Fine Times at Our House

While he works with students of all ages and skill levels, it's the beginners that give him the most satisfaction. "Of course, it is the most challenging as well, especially since I'm not there to manually manipulate their hands. But when the lightbulb goes on, it's so exciting. I feel that I am helping students build a strong musical foundation, and that's what keeps me going."

Adam has recorded several albums throughout his career, including *Intrigue*, *Insight*, *Perspective*, *Earthtones*, and *Fine Times at Our House*. He does not compose his music but relies on the vast canon of traditional repertoire and reinvents it

in his way.

“I try to adapt this repertoire to the banjo in a way that is different from other musicians. I learn much from traditional fiddle players. I try to honor the music and reference the musical instruments that I’m playing.”

His newest recording project is called *Back to the Earth*. “It’s a follow-up to *Earthtones*, which was released ten years ago.” The project contains a collection of music played on the gourd banjo. “The gourd banjo has such a special sound. I love the sound of the instrument. This album is special to me because there are some musical collaborations with other artists.”



adam hurt | *earth tones*



SOLO GOURD BANJO MUSIC

Discover more about Adam Hurt and his music on his website

https://youtu.be/g6Z_R27ZFgg