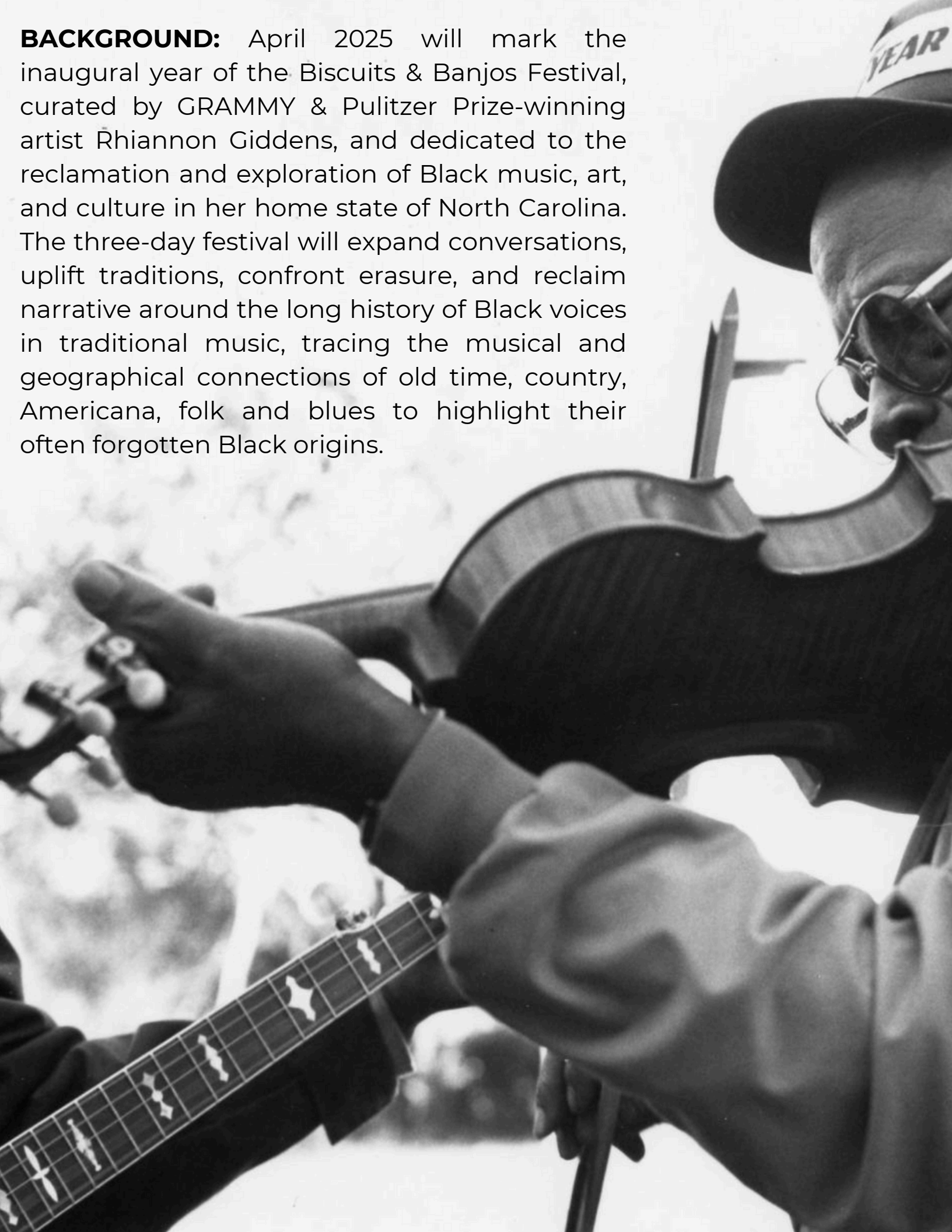


*a new festival from Rhiannon Giddens*

# BISCUITS & BANJOS

**Presented to Durham County  
Office of the County Manager**

**BACKGROUND:** April 2025 will mark the inaugural year of the Biscuits & Banjos Festival, curated by GRAMMY & Pulitzer Prize-winning artist Rhiannon Giddens, and dedicated to the reclamation and exploration of Black music, art, and culture in her home state of North Carolina. The three-day festival will expand conversations, uplift traditions, confront erasure, and reclaim narrative around the long history of Black voices in traditional music, tracing the musical and geographical connections of old time, country, Americana, folk and blues to highlight their often forgotten Black origins.







The festival will gather a robust collection of both emerging and established Black musicians, chefs, and literary figures, expanding the conversation on broader trends of the Black arts movement(s), Black consciousness, and Black music studies. This gathering will provide opportunity for those working outside the mainstream to come together in community, while showing the similar journeys the culture has taken across music, food, and literature, especially in the South.

Biscuits and Banjos will include lectures, workshops, book readings from authors, and cooking demonstrations. In addition to musical performances, Biscuits & Banjos will offer robust humanities components, to include panels, workshops, and Durham walking tours, all related to the region and its cultural history.

Accessible opportunities for engagement with the general public will be created across downtown Durham through a range of free activities for families, affordable ticket pricing, and an accompanying livestream.

Through local organizations like Hayti Center, our Community Engagement advisor Rissi Palmer, and the Durham-based production team led by Cicely Mitchell, we will curate and integrate local businesses, artists, and audiences from the community. While programming is still in progress, panel discussions in progress to date include:

*Black Voices in Country Music* - led by Rhiannon Giddens,

Alice Randall, and Rissi Palmer

*Place and Food* - Justin Robinson

*Ancestars* - Nnenna and Pierce Freelon



The festival will be promoted regionally, with a particular focus on the local community of Durham, which has a higher concentration of Black residents than other areas of North Carolina and a rich African-American history. We are working in partnership with civic, commercial, and nonprofit partners to make the event a success. Festival attendance is expected to be around 3,000 people per day, or 10,000 attendees over the festival weekend.

According to Americans for the Arts' Arts & Economic Prosperity Calculator, the festival's estimated \$1.8 million budget in the first year, along with 10,000 expected attendance, will yield the following:

- An estimated \$2.2M in overall expenditures, which includes money spent on producing the festival that returned to the local economy, as well as money spent on hotels, dining, and restaurants by attendees;
- An estimated \$123,000 in local and state tax revenue, along with \$324,000 in federal government tax revenue; and
- \$1.62M in household income to residents, generated by expenditures of the Festival as a result of the investment in the Durham community.

The festival will create at least 41 short-term jobs in Durham.

**The County's investment will be used solely for the compensation of Durham-based personnel, including festival production, community programming, and artists - keeping your dollars local!**