The Mountain Minor

Written and Directed by
Dale Farmer
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(937) 545-2608

Produced by
Susan Pepper
balladrecords@gmail.com
(828) 406-8954

Run Time 1:29:07
Shot in 4K, 16X9

Web Site
https://themountainminormovie.com
Facebook
www.facebook.com/alt452Productions
Trailer
https://vimeo.com/216869838
Production Stills and Poster
https://themountainminormovie.com/gallery/

Awards
Jukebox International Film Festival
  Best of Festival
  Jury Award, Second Place
  Outstanding Achievement Award
    (Hazel Pasley, Asa Nelson)
Endless Mountains Film Festival
  Best of Festival
  Best Director
  Best Actor (Asa Nelson)
Queen City Film Festival 8/14/18
  Best Film in Category
Franklin International Independent Film Festival 11/3/18
  Best Feature Film Drama
UPIKE Film and Media Arts Festival 04/06/19
  Spirit of the Mountains Award (Presented by Kentucky Governor Paul Paton)
Longleaf Film Festival
  Best Feature Film Drama
Northeast Mountain Film Festival
  Best Feature Film Drama
Log Line
A life-worn Charlie Abner struggles with leaving his present life and family in Ohio to return to his childhood Kentucky Mountain home and the music and lifestyle that once defined him, but first he must pass the many generations’ mystic music on to his grandkids.

Synopsis
Deeply infused with the traditional Appalachian musical genres of Old Time and Bluegrass, *The Mountain Minor* tells an overlooked story about the people and culture behind the resurgence of American Roots Music today and highlights artful responses to the difficult circumstances of human migration. In the 1920s–1950s, millions of Appalachians left their homes in the mountains and migrated to urban Midwestern centers in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio. *The Mountain Minor* is the story of a life-worn Charlie Abner, a generation later, as he struggles with leaving his present life and family in Cincinnati, Ohio to return to the Kentucky Mountain home and musical heritage that once defined him. The story is partially told in flashbacks to depression era Eastern Kentucky, when Charlie’s parents, Oza and Vestal Abner, face the difficult decision to leave the way of life they know and move to Ohio for employment and better opportunities. This film is unique in that all of its principal actors are traditional musicians—such as Smithsonian Folkways artist Elizabeth LaPrelle and acclaimed banjoist and fiddler Dan Gellert—and they perform all of the music in the film.

Director’s Statement
When I tell people about *The Mountain Minor*, the first things they usually ask are “What’s it about?” and “Is it a true story?” Although *The Mountain Minor* isn’t the literal story of any one of my grandparents, it’s based on thousands of true stories of Appalachian migrants, my grandparents included. American Roots music wasn’t born in coffee shops or on festival stages; it was sustained by families and communities over centuries in fields and on front porches, across land and sea. In *The Mountain Minor*, I’m sharing those roots with audiences so they can experience the substance and special meaning of Appalachian music as it was passed down over the generations to today’s stages, porches and media devices.

My grandparents came to the Cincinnati area from the mountain counties of eastern Kentucky. As the oldest grandchild, I had a special relationship with my grandparents. All four of my grandparents were musicians, playing fiddles, banjos, guitars and singing ballads. As a young boy I was drawn to the stories they would tell of growing up on their remote mountain farms. I was especially interested in the stories of mountain square dances, church singing and porch music with the family gathered around. I eventually became a musician myself and found that playing many of those same notes and musical phrases that sailed the Atlantic gave me this transcendent experience—a connection with family long gone that I could never have otherwise. I also realized that the music also followed a difficult path in these migrations.

*The Mountain Minor* is my way of passing along this musical heritage. Though *The Mountain Minor* comes from my own digging into family roots, we have found people all over the country can identify with it—people who have left their homes in Appalachia or other areas of the globe for a myriad of reasons. People who struggle with the complexities of the question: where is home? We hope our film will be a springboard for conversations around migration and Appalachian music and identity. We hope the story of the Abner Family will inspire audiences to probe deeper into their own roots and to listen more closely to the stories of others.
Bios

Dale Farmer (Writer and Director) was born and raised in Butler County, Ohio and as a young adult moved to Nashville, TN to pursue a music career. After a few years of performing in Nashville, Dale moved back to Ohio and followed his second passion as an Emergency Response Coordinator for The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. When not responding to hazardous chemical spills, Dale produced videos for the US EPA, Michigan Department of Health and other government and nonprofit entities. Dale is also a skilled multi-instrumentalist who plays in several bands in the Greater Cincinnati Area and has engineered and produced several music albums. Dale’s passion is storytelling, so corporate scripts eventually gave way to screenplays. Dale grew up absorbing the stories and mountain music traditions of his grandparents, all of whom were Appalachian musicians and ballad singers. Heeding the advice to “write what you know,” Dale has created the story and film, The Mountain Minor, based on his family’s own experiences of migrating from the Appalachian mountains. Recently retired from his position as Emergency Response Coordinator, Dale now works full time on film making and running alt452 Productions, a film company dedicated to bringing Appalachian stories to life.

Elizabeth LaPrelle (Oza Abner), raised in Rural Retreat, VA, grew up in a home where there was always singing, and a community with many fine old-time musicians. She currently performs in the award winning duo, Anna and Elizabeth, which recently released a groundbreaking album The Invisible Comes To Us under the Smithsonian Folkways label. Elizabeth developed her repertoire from neighbors and revered musicians like Jim Lloyd, under the tutelage of powerful female ballad singers Ginny Hawker and Sheila Kay Adams, and from a wealth of field recordings of legendary singers from the mountains. Elizabeth has performed at festivals and concerts all over the country; toured on the East and West coasts as part of the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) Music from the Crooked Road project; won prizes at countless Fiddler’s Conventions. She was a guest on Garrison Kiellor’s A Prairie Home Companion in 2005. She has been hailed as “the best young Appalachian ballad singer to emerge in recent memory” by UK’s fRoots Magazine.

Dan Gellert (Charlie Abner) is a legend in the field of old time American music. Inspired by the folk music revival of the 1960s and records he heard growing up in New Jersey, he began to master the banjo, guitar, and fiddle, and sing. At an early age he discovered the importance of taking the time to understand the music in a complete and detailed way, as if it were a language. While Dan is playing, one gets the sense he has entered another world which combines all his influences, yet it is his playfulness and improvisational sensibilities which make his style powerful and instantly recognizable. Dan’s fiddling is bluesy and rhythmic and without regard for modern standards of pitch and tone. In other words, he follows his muse, which makes his music stand alone in a world of timid imitators. Not for the faint of heart, Dan Gellert is a commanding and uncompromising talent.
Asa Nelson (Young Charlie Abner) declared at the ripe old age of 4, “I wanna play the fiddle, Mama.” A year later he began lessons and soon entered the Junior Appalachian Musicians program in Boone NC. He hasn’t slowed down since. He plays by ear and has had the great fortune of learning knee to knee from some of the best old time fiddlers in the country. He also plays clawhammer banjo and guitar and is an award winning flatfoot dancer. Asa has been the recipient of the Wayne C. Henderson scholarship, the Houston Caldwell Scholarship and the Charlotte Folk Society Scholarship to the Swannanoa Gathering. He received the Houston Caldwell Best All Around Youth award in Fries, Virginia. He has won numerous blue ribbons at fiddlers conventions in NC, TN and VA, and most recently took first place in youth old time fiddle at the prestigious Galax Old Time Fiddlers’ Convention. He now assists with teaching in the JAM program and also shares his gift in nursing homes and to school children. Asa lives on the family farm near Zionville, NC with his parents.

Trevor McKenzie (Scorer and Ves Abner) is a multi-instrumentalist and singer originally from southwest Virginia. The progeny of cattle farmers, he first gravitated to old-time music through an early interest in regional history and a keen desire to avoid doing manual labor. Though only mildly successful in the latter ambition, he gathered a respect for the communities, historical events, and stories which continue to build the canon of traditional music. Encouraged initially by family and church music, his formal musical training began at Jim Lloyd’s Barbershop in Rural Retreat, Virginia. In recent years he has continued to learn from and be humbled by skilled musicians from along the Appalachians and around the world. Trevor currently lives in western North Carolina where he performs as a sideman with several regional acts including the Elkville String Band and the Laurel Creek String Band. On weekdays, he puts his historical knowledge and dusting skills to work in the archives of the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University.

Ma Crow (Ruth Abner), leading Bluegrass woman, is beloved for her sweet singing voice. She won a Cincinnati Entertainment Award in 1999. She fronts Ma Crow and Company, formerly Ma Crow and the Lady Slippers. They have released three studio recordings and maintain a busy touring schedule. Ma also played for many years with the well known Cincinnati bands Ma Crow and the Flock as well as Ma Crow and the Medicine Show, Motherpluckers (nominees for a Cincinnati Entertainment Award), and Katie Laur’s All-Girl Bluegrass Band. She has recorded with various artists including Harold Kennedy, Roger Yeardly, the Flock, and Plow on Boy.
Susan Pepper (Producer and Sandra Abner) is a grassroots musician, performer and educator based in Jackson County, NC. She has dedicated the past fifteen or so years to sharing heartfelt songs and building community through music. After getting bitten by the “ballad bug,” Susan sought out and documented the music and life stories of several older ballad singers in Western North Carolina over a period of years and produced On the Threshold of a Dream, an album of field recordings of their music. She shares the music given to her through teaching workshops and performing, working with the Junior Appalachian Musicians Program and most recently, producing The Mountain Minor. Pepper's performances include unaccompanied ballads as well as folk songs with banjo, dulcimer and guitar. She is currently working on her second album of traditional and original music.

Mike Oberst (Willie Abner) is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist, musician, and songwriter best known as a co-founder of the Cincinnati, Ohio string band, The Tillers. The Tillers’ rise to prominence in the local and national folk scene was a rapid one, bolstered by a stroke of good fortune in the summer of 2009, when their recording of Mike’s song “There is a Road (Route 50)” was featured on veteran NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw’s USA Network television documentary on the history and significance of US Route 50. The Tillers’ fifth album, Revolution Row, was recently released on SofaBurn Records.

Hazel Pasley (Young Ruthie) was born and raised in the mountains of North Carolina and began playing guitar in the third grade, starting with her father’s instruction and then entering Alleghany JAM, a local after-school traditional music program. She also clogs and plays clawhammer banjo. Music and dance have been a part of a rich childhood for Hazel filled with fiddlers conventions, square dances, jams, and a wonderful community of musicians. All the members of her immediate family play music in a family band. She’s been known to form unusual bands with her friends, such as the Vegetarian Fisherman with Mullets, Bare Feet, and Coon Skin Hats, to compete at conventions and get a good laugh out of the emcee announcing their band name. As often as not, she’s fallen asleep to a fiddle tune ringing out somewhere in the house. This summer, she co-authored and directed a play, The Missing Masterpiece, in local summer theater group.
Paul Halluch (Director of Photography) developed a keen eye for leadership as he bounced between Boston, Mass. and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. After settling down in South Florida, Halluch studied Motion Picture and Broadcasting at G-Star School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, Fla., where his passion grew from a mere hobby to the beginning of his career. Upon graduation, Paul traveled to over 30 countries as a videographer for international organizations such as One Hope Ministries and Samaritan’s Purse, in conjunction to creating Wonderland Woods Productions with Jerry and Eitan.

Eitan Abramowitz chose the road less traveled and studied motion picture and filmmaking at G-Star School of the Arts, where he met Paul Halluch and Jerry Sebastian. After graduating G-star in 2009, Eitan moved to New York and interned for Worldview Entertainment as an executive assistant. Later, he moved back to West Palm Beach, Fla., to join Taral Productions as a videographer and assistant editor. It wasn’t until the summer of 2012 that Eitan moved with Paul and Jerry to Boone, N.C., to pursue their dream of creating Wonderland Woods Productions.

Jerry Sebastian (Sound) was raised in Miami, Fla., before studying film at G-Star School of the Arts in West Palm Beach. Upon graduation, Jerry moved to Key Largo, Fla., where he began to pursue marine biology. However, Jerry fell in love with capturing the species on film, reminding him of his true passion. Jerry soon joined Eitan and Paul up in Boone, N.C., rekindling his infatuation with storytelling.

Production Team

Written and directed by Dale Farmer
Produced by Susan Pepper
Fiscal Sponsor: From the Heart Productions
Casting by Susan Pepper and Dale Farmer
Production Company: alt452 productions
Production by Wonderland Woods Productions
Director of Photography: Paul Halluch
Sound Design: Jerry Sebastian
Editor: Eitan Abramowicz
Film Score: Trevor McKenzie
Filmed on location at Willet Ponds Farm in Todd, North Carolina

Credits

Charlie Abner
Oza Abner
Charlie Abner (Youth)
Ruth Abner
Ruthie Abner (Youth)
Vestal Abner
Tom Abner
Granny Whit
Elder Alton Radcliff
Dan
Willie Abner
Ves Abner
Sandra Abner
Kim Abner
Jimmy Abner
Julie Abner
Hershel Abner
Hershel’s wife
Hershel’s grandson
Willie Abner (baby)
Sarah Abner
Charlie Abner (Toddler)
Sandra Abner’s husband
Sandra Abner’s daughter
Sandra Abner’s son
Sandra Abner’s daughter
The Willie Abner Band

Dan Gellert
Elizabeth LaPrelle
Asa Nelson
Ma Crow
Hazel Pasley
Jonathan Bradshaw
Warren Waldron
Judy Waldron
Ed Pilkinson
Chuck Blackburn
Mike Oberst
Trevor McKenzie
Susan Pepper
Tracy Jarrell
Aaron Wolfe
Alison Moretz
Lucas Pasley
Betty Dixon
Wyatt Wolfe
Naomi Jarrell
Rhoda Bradshaw
Hubbard Bradshaw
James Moretz
Julie Moretz
Jack Moretz
Josie Moretz
The Tillers
Mike Oberst
Sean Geal
Aaron Geal
Joe Macherette

The Music

Tecumseh on the Battlefield
Written by Mike Oberst

Hickory Jack
The Tillers
Traditional

Hickory Jack
Warren Waldron, Asa Nelson, Dan Gellert, Trevor McKenzie, Mike Oberst
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Composer/Arranger</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Emily (Edmond in the Lowlands Low)</td>
<td>Elizabeth LaPrelle</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Emily (Edmond in the Lowlands Low)</td>
<td>Asa Nelson (Fiddle)</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give the Fiddler a Dram</td>
<td>Asa Nelson, Elizabeth LaPrelle</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Jimmy Sutton</td>
<td>Asa Nelson, Elizabeth LaPrelle</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Jimmy Sutton</td>
<td>Warren Waldron, Judy Waldron, Elizabeth LaPrelle, Cecil Gurganus</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally in the Turnip Patch</td>
<td>Asa Nelson, Hazel Pasley</td>
<td>Written by Benton Flippen</td>
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<td>Brushy Fork of John's Creek</td>
<td>Dan Gellert</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darling Corey</td>
<td>Asa Nelson, Elizabeth LaPrelle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glory in the Meeting House</td>
<td>Dan Gellert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darling Corey 1985</td>
<td>Ma Crow, Susan Pepper, Aaron Wolfe, Lucas Pasley, Trevor McKenzie</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<td>Cripple Creek</td>
<td>Dan Gellert, Ma Crow</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m Going to A City</td>
<td>The Association of Old Regular Baptists</td>
<td>Traditional/Courtesy of Old Regular Baptists</td>
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<td>I'm Going to a City</td>
<td>Dan Gellert</td>
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<td>Ways of the World</td>
<td>Dan Gellert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shakin' Down the Acorns</td>
<td>Dan Gellert</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shakin' Down the Acorns</td>
<td>Warren Waldron</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rye Straw</td>
<td>Dan Gellert</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Time Here and a Long Time Gone</td>
<td>Jean Dowell and Mike Oberst</td>
<td>Written by Jean Dowell</td>
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<td>The Day is Past and Gone</td>
<td>Susan Pepper and Trevor McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Krazy Kat</td>
<td>The Anacrorhythms</td>
<td>Written by Frank Fitch</td>
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<td>Hawks and Eagles</td>
<td>Trevor McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingdom Come</td>
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<td>Little Birdie</td>
<td>Trevor McKenzie</td>
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<td>Baby Mine</td>
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<td>Paddy on the Turnpike</td>
<td>Trevor McKenzie</td>
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<td>Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane</td>
<td>Trevor McKenzie</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Across the Ohio</td>
<td>Jake Book, Susan Pepper, Lucas Pasley, Trevor McKenzie and Dale Farmer</td>
<td>Written by Dale Farmer</td>
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<td>Comin' From the Ball</td>
<td>Warren Waldron, Judy Waldron, Elizabeth LaPrelle</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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