

# The Mountain Minor

Written and Directed by

Dale Farmer

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Produced by

Susan Pepper

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Run Time 1:29:07

Shot in 4K, 16X9

Web Site

<https://themountainminormovie.com>

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/alt452Productions](http://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 Keillor'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 Yearly, 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.



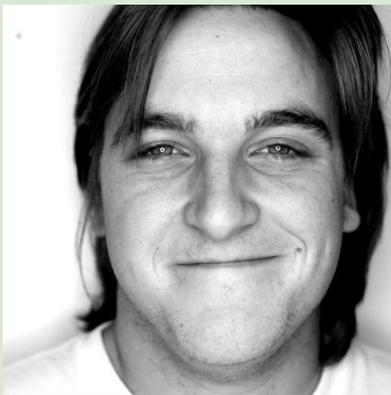
**Hazel Pasley** (Young Ruthie) was born and raised in the mountains of North Carolina and began playing guitar in the third grade, starting with her father's instruction and then entering Alleghany JAM, a local after-school traditional music program. She also clogs and plays clawhammer banjo. Music 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 Abramowitz

Film Score: Trevor McKenzie

Filmed on location at [Willet Ponds Farm](#) in Todd, North Carolina

## Credits

Charlie Abner	Dan Gellert
Oza Abner	Elizabeth LaPrelle
Charlie Abner (Youth)	Asa Nelson
Ruth Abner	Ma Crow
Ruthie Abner (Youth)	Hazel Pasley
Vestal Abner	Jonathan Bradshaw
Tom Abner	Warren Waldron
Granny Whit	Judy Waldron
Elder Alton Radcliff	Ed Pilkington
Dan	Chuck Blackburn
Willie Abner	Mike Oberst
Ves Abner	Trevor McKenzie
Sandra Abner	Susan Pepper
Kim Abner	Tracy Jarrell
Jimmy Abner	Aaron Wolfe
Julie Abner	Alison Moretz
Hershel Abner	Lucas Pasley
Hershel's wife	Betty Dixon
Hershel's grandson	Wyatt Wolfe
Willie Abner (baby)	Naomi Jarrell
Sarah Abner	Rhoda Bradshaw
Charlie Abner (Toddler)	Hubbard Bradshaw
Sandra Abner's husband	James Moretz
Sandra Abner's daughter	Julie Moretz
Sandra Abner's son	Jack Moretz
Sandra Abner's daughter	Josie Moretz
The Willie Abner Band	The Tillers
	Mike Oberst
	Sean Geal
	Aaron Geal
	Joe Macherette

## The Music

Tecumseh on the Battlefield	The Tillers	Written by Mike Oberst
Hickory Jack	The Tillers	Traditional
Hickory Jack	Warren Waldron, Asa Nelson, Dan Gellert, Trevor McKenzie, Mike Oberst	

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