



YAM NOTES

FALL 2025

NEWS FROM THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUSICIANS

IRISH PERFORMERS VISIT HAGOOD MILL

 **An Irish-
Appalachian
Cultural
Exchange** 

Wednesday, November 5
Irish Music & Appalachian Jam
7:00-9:30 PM

Thursday, November 6
**Irish Dance & Square Dance
Celebration**
7:00-9:30 PM

Performances by
Tigh na Coille (County Clare, Ireland)
with
**Young Appalachian Musicians and
the Hotfoot Cloggers**

HAGOOD MILL HISTORIC SITE
138 Hagood Mill Rd, Pickens, SC
visithagoodmill.com

Hagood Mill Historic Site and Young Appalachian Musicians (YAM) are excited to announce a rare cultural opportunity this fall as they partner to welcome a troupe of award-winning Irish musicians, singers, and dancers from County Clare, Ireland. The group, known as Tigh na Coille, will visit Pickens on November 5-6, 2025, as part of their American cultural tour.

The ensemble of 18 students and two teacher-chaperones will arrive from the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina, bringing with them a vibrant exchange of traditional Irish music, dance, and heritage. Their visit to Pickens will provide a bridge between Appalachian and Irish traditions — a meeting of two musical cultures that share deep historical roots.

Wednesday, November 5 — Irish Music & Appalachian Jam (7:00-9:30 PM)

7:00-8:30 PM: Performances by Irish and Appalachian musicians

8:30-9:30 PM: Community jam session
(all welcome to join)

Thursday, November 6 — Irish Dance & Square Dance Celebration (7:00-9:30 PM)

7:00-8:30 PM: Performances by Irish and Appalachian dancers

8:30-9:30 PM: Community square dance
and Irish party

KIDS ON BLUEGRASS SHINE AS STARS!

You should have heard the buzz among our youth as they recounted the wonderful experiences they had at the International Bluegrass Music Association's Kids on Bluegrass! It took place during the week of September 15th this year at the new venue location, in Chattanooga, TN!

This is the program that highlights the talents of young singers and musicians, ages 4 – 17 years, providing them with the opportunity to perform in a band with their peers, and to create and arrange their own music. During their experiences at Kids on Bluegrass, they learn to emcee, promote, and perform on stage.

This year, there were two tracks, the Honors Track and the Camp Track. The Honors Track allowed the participants to perform two sets at IBMA Bluegrass Live along with several other impressive perks. The Camp Track is the result of the teamwork of IBMA and the JAM Program. These participants are invited to play on the Youth Stage and also are entitled to other wonderful benefits as well.

Selected for Kids on Bluegrass this year were YAM alumni Elijah Ellenburg, Malachi Ellenburg, Kamdyn Simpson, and Judson Stone.

Elijah Ellenburg is a talented youth who is gifted on the banjo, dobro, guitar, and bass and was selected to play the upright bass for Kids on Bluegrass this year. Having come up through the YAM Program, he is a SPPKids alumni and has been an instructor for the YAM Program for six years. He also plays the banjo in the Bluegrass & Company Band.

Malachi Ellenburg was selected to play the fiddle at Kids on Bluegrass. He is also gifted in several instruments. In addition to fiddle, he also plays mandolin and guitar. Malachi was also a SPPKid member and began instructing for the YAM Program during the Covid era. One of Malachi's favorite experiences from Kids of Bluegrass was to be able to meet some musical "greats," such as Billy Strings.

Qualifying for Kids on Bluegrass in guitar was Kamdyn Simpson. She is also a talented singer. She played in the "topaz" jam track during the week, and her group performed on the international Stage and Youth Stage twice. Her group also received tickets to the IBMA awards show, and also were fortunate to meet the musical hero, Doyle Lawson! Kamdyn's instructor is Alyssa White, who was also on the faculty at Kids on Bluegrass.



INTERNATIONAL BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION

Judson Stone qualified for Kids on Bluegrass on the mandolin, although he is quite gifted in guitar and banjo as well. Judson was also a SPPKid, has instructed for the YAM Program for several years, and is a member of the band Creekwater Collective. His band played on the Youth Stage, and Judson also played in several performances with his Kids on Bluegrass Band. Judson's favorite part of IBMA was "playing new instruments in the exhibit hall and jamming with his friends."

Our YAM alumni bands, Bluegrass and Company (Elijah Ellenburg, Malachi Ellenburg, and Alyssa White) and Creekwater Collective (Ayden Chappell, Ethan Chappell, JonPaul Sepulveda, Judson Stone, and Lilly Svrlinga) were there to represent the YAM alumni well. Also, Cain Pilgrim and Alyssa White, YAM alumni, are members of the Clemson Bluegrass Ensemble and they performed on the College and Youth Stage.



WONDERFUL MEMORIES FROM A WONDERFUL WEEK OF
KIDS ON BLUEGRASS!



WINTER BLUEGRASS JUBILEE

14TH ANNUAL

Presented by the Young Appalachian Musicians



Volume 5



Alan Bibey & Grasstowne

JAN 31 ★ 2026

Along with the
ETSU Bluegrass
Band
and many
local bands



Keep an eye on yamupstate.com and social media for more info to come.

SWEET POTATO PIE KIDS OFF TO AN IMPRESSIVE START



The Sweet Potato Pie Kid Performing Band, under the direction of Logan Redding, has had an impressive start, having many engagements already. Band members on the guitar are Maggie Alexander, Gannon Bates, Juan E. Carmona, and Cade Samples. Lyllian Accampo, Gracie Anderson, and Ava Meece perform on the fiddle. Jayce Hamilton and Jace Langston play the banjo, and Lily Anderson and Everly Southerland complement on the mandolin.

Future engagements are:

October 26 – Calvary Hill Baptist Church Fall Fest

November 29 – Oolenoy Community House

December 5 – Pickens Christmas Parade

May 1 – End of Year Concert

If you would like to book a performance for an event, you may contact Logan Redding at (864) 508-4212 for details.

PROUDLY INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF

We, in the YAM Program, are ecstatic to welcome this fantastic group of instructors and program directors into the 2025-26 afterschool and evening programs!



Abby Moore Program Director at Liberty Elementary

Hey everyone! My name is Abby Moore, the new Program Director at Liberty Elementary. This is my second school year at LES as the Technology Assistant, but I spent 4 years here as a student many years ago. My family has deep roots in Pickens County, and I am so happy

to be able to give back to the community that raised and shaped me.

I have a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from North Greenville University. I do not play an instrument... yet. I have just begun learning banjo. I have always had a deep appreciation for bluegrass music and have always dreamed of playing the banjo. So, why not begin now?

I have been married for 2 years to my husband Tyler and have an angel baby, Cayce, and a daughter, Chesney, who will be 2 in December. I am so excited to be a part of the YAMs family and am so thankful for those that have quickly welcomed me in.



Brittany Roper Program Director at Forest Acres Elementary

Hello, I'm excited to be a part of the YAM program at Forest Acres Elementary for its very first year! My position at the school is Kindergarten Assistant. My interest in bluegrass music comes from being raised by my grandparents. My grandmother loved to go country dancing in

N.C. I lived in three states during my growing up years, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

I started playing the violin when I was 11 years old and still find joy in picking it up to play. I also enjoy playing the piano.

I have two sons. Both are very active in band! We have a few pets at home as well. I look forward to working with each student this year and hearing about the growth they make along the way!

Lindsey Stone Program Director at Six Mile Elementary

I teach 4th grade at Six Mile Elementary, and my husband Jake, works for Hershberger Construction. I play piano and I love to sing.

Jake plays guitar and bass, and sometimes plays bass for Creekwater Collective, the band of which our son, Judson, is a member. Judson plays mandolin, guitar, and banjo. Jake and Judson have both instructed for YAM, either in the afterschool or evening programs, or both. Our daughter, Nora, also plays mandolin, and is a second-year mandolin student at Six Mile Elementary.

Both Jake and I enjoy teaching and volunteering at our church in our free time. We also enjoy spending a lot of time traveling with Judson's band, Creekwater Collective. We are excited to be a part of the YAM program this year!



Kasey Batson YAM Program Director and Founder/Director of Inspire Homeschool Co-op

I am an educator of 25 years and have homeschooled for 15 years. I am the founder and director of Inspire Homeschool Co-op which began operating three years ago.

As a child I played the organ and piano. I see the importance of kids learning an instrument. I am a lover of Bluegrass and am thrilled to offer the AMAZING YAMS opportunity to our homeschooled families at co-op weekly. I love the outdoors, spending time with my family and also baking!

I have been married to my supportive husband Jon for 23 years. We have three amazing girls-Ally Grace is a sophomore at Western Carolina, Ellory Hope is a freshman, and Hannah Faith is a 7th grader. I love my family!

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide YAMS through Inspire. Our kids love their time with their instructors and are excited to grow in their capabilities as bluegrass musicians.



PROUDLY INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF (Continued)



Jensen Thomassie Program Director at East End Elementary

I began playing guitar when I was seven years old, and that was my first instrument. After that I got into percussion in band in 4th grade, then continued that through the rest of my schooling. It wasn't until six years ago that I decided to pick up banjo and

mandolin.

Percussion is my primary instrument, and both my undergrad degrees and my master's are in percussion performance! In the past, I taught at J. L. Mann High School as percussion director and at the University of South Carolina as a Graduate Assistant with the Carolina Band Drumline.

On the bluegrass side, I play mandolin as my primary, as well as a little guitar and a lot of clawhammer banjo! (But no Scruggs style....)

My undergraduate degree at Furman was also in music composition, so I write music for a variety of musicians and ensembles across the country: anything from small chamber ensemble work performed at the Lincoln Center in New York City to solo percussion works with electronic accompaniment.

I also write for a lot of marching bands throughout South Carolina and Georgia, as well as a few university band programs. I've performed with the Aiken Symphony Orchestra as well as a section percussionist.

I'm so glad to be a part of the YAM family, and I'm extremely excited about the rest of the year with YAMs at East End Elementary!



Kaycee Hardin Fiddle, Mandolin Instructor at Ambler and Dacusville Elementaries

I'm a 90's kid who grew up in Pumpkintown, SC where my unconventional childhood shaped how and what instruments I play today. A pivotal moment came for me in Y2K when the famed Dr. Ralph Stanley played at the

Blue Ridge Electric Co-op in Pickens during one of his final tours. His fiddle player gave me a signed CD of his old-time/bluegrass music and personally encouraged me to

pursue playing fiddle by ear. I was soon hooked on playing the Appalachian fiddle classics.

My parents started taking me to Oolenoy and other jam circles when I was 11 years old where I was greatly encouraged by local musicians, Dan and Norma Hendricks, Robert Perry, and Josh Johnson. Eventually, I was playing fiddle, mandolin, guitar, dulcimer, and a few other instruments throughout my elementary and middle school years. Later, I was blessed to play and sing on mission trips to Mexico, New York City, and China.

Janet Hardin and the Matt and Ferris Chappell Family have been a great inspiration to me over the years as I have delved into music again as an adult through musical functions with them at church.

I'm a big believer in learning as much music as you can while you're young so that you can bless and enrich the lives of others with those skills throughout the rest of your life. Both my son and daughter have participated in YAMs and are continuing their musical education with piano and saxophone. We find that music is just a lot of fun and a wonderful way to spend time with the many friends you meet along the way. It's a timeless hobby that has no age limit!

Zack Miller Guitar Instructor for Pickens Evening Program

Hey there! I'm Zack Miller, a Pickens, SC native and proud Pickens High School graduate (Class of 2010). I am a ten-year U.S. Air Force veteran and first picked up the guitar while stationed in Japan, looking for a way to pass the time. However, playing the guitar actually turned into a lifelong passion.

These days, I'm back home in the Upstate, working as a carpenter and running my own business, Miller Carpentry. When I'm not on the job site, you'll find me teaching guitar with the YAM Program, helping others discover the same joy that music brought to me.

I'm drawn to the acoustic side of things, especially bluegrass and artists like Gregory Alan Isakov, Billy Strings, and Tyler Childers. My lessons focus on building real connection and confidence with the instrument, keeping things relaxed and enjoyable, while you grow at your own pace.



PROUDLY INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF (Continued)



Ferris Chappell, **Fiddle Instructor for** **Pickens Evening Program**

Ferris is a native of the upstate. Her background includes studying music theory and performing classical piano and violin.

Ferris is a wife and mother of four children. When she's not working as a full-time radiographer, you'll find her playing and

studying old time or bluegrass fiddle repertoire, supporting various bluegrass bands at local and regional festivals, promoting and supporting her two youngest boys' band, Creekwater Collective, watching her daughter, Lily, clog at competitions, or cooking up something yummy in the kitchen.

Jarah Roper Program Director & Instructor of Evening Program at Southern Wesleyan University

Jarah has been a fiddle and mandolin instructor in the YAM Program for many years at Liberty Elementary and also at the Liberty Evening Program. This year she has also taken on the full duties as a Program Director, having assisted her dad, Jared Roper, in past years.

Since she is a student at Southern Wesleyan, she decided to check into having an Evening Program there, and sure enough, she was able to pull that off. The program is located on the lower level of the Fine Arts wing. Please read below as Jarah tells you more about herself:

I play fiddle, bass, mandolin, piano, and I am a junior music education major with a concentration in voice.

I enjoy taking walks, reading, and doing crafty projects with my clothes. My family is rather large and continues to grow. My

parents are Brandi and Jared Roper, and my siblings are Josiah Roper and Arianna Swain.

Listing all my joys and blessings would not be complete without acknowledging the origin of these gifts, and that would be my Heavenly Father.

I love teaching and I look forward to growing with my students this year!

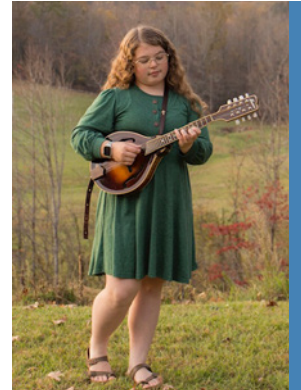


Lily Chapell Mandolin Instructor for Pickens Evening Program

Lily is a 13-year-old young musician, also from here in the upstate. Having been raised in a musical family, Lily was surrounded by the sounds of Appalachian folk and bluegrass from an early age. Her musical journey began at the age of nine when she first picked up the guitar. Her background also includes piano and music theory – but fast forward a few years later, the mandolin has become her instrument of choice.

Lily progressed from being a YAM student to being a member of the Sweet Potato Pie Kids band from 2023-2025. Over the past several years, Lily was awarded scholarships and placed in some local competitions. She has also performed onstage with several prominent bluegrass musicians, including Darren Nicholson and most recently, Alan Bibey, with whom she is currently taking private lessons.

When Lily isn't practicing her mandolin, you'll find her clogging with her competition team from Mile High Stompers (out of Six Mile), watching episodes of Survivor, cooking, crafting, drawing, painting, or practicing archery.

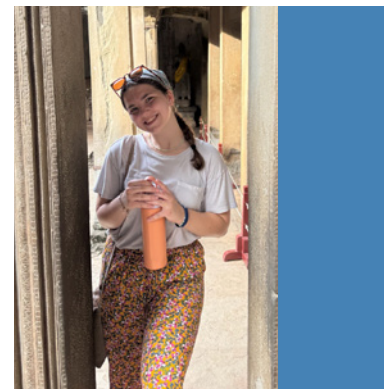


Selah Smith Southern Wesleyan University Evening Program

Hi! My name is Selah Smith, and I am a sophomore at Southern Wesleyan. I am currently studying Pre-Medicine and Biology, but I am taking an interest in Nursing.

I have sung all my life and also play bass and guitar.

Worship leading and missions have been passions of mine for a long time. I also enjoy being outside, writing songs, swing dancing, and hanging out with my favorite people. Most importantly, Jesus is my best friend! I look forward to sharing what I have learned with my students and taking part in their lives!



PROUDLY INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF (Continued)



Whitman Tetor **Banjo Instructor at** **Hagood Elementary**

Although Whitman is a new banjo instructor this year, he is definitely not a new face in the YAM community! Enrolling in the YAM Program in 3rd grade, Whitman has continued to develop his banjo skills, qualifying and performing for

the SPPKids in 6th and 7th grades, and now he has begun his instructing career at Hagood Elementary Afterschool Program.

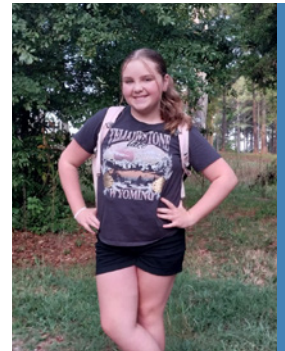
Having many talents, even at an early age, before his 7th birthday, Whitman was already playing the drums. Then, around the age of 7, he decided to switch to the banjo and took lessons from a private instructor in Easley. Currently, Whitman is an 8th grade student at Pickens Middle School, where he is a House Leader in the student council. He is also a member of the Pickens High School cross country and soccer teams and is also active in boy scouts.

Whitman's dad, Justin, also plays stringed instruments, and his mom, Heather, heads up the concession stand at the Winter Jubilee each year. Whitman's siblings are Ella, Anna, Benjamin, and Sybil.

Ava Meece **Fiddle Instructor at Forest Acres Elementary**

Ava is a talented fiddle player who is beginning her instructing career at Forest Acres Elementary, our newest YAM program to date. She is 13 years old and is an 8th grade student at R. C. Edwards Middle School. Ava has been playing the fiddle for almost four years. She originally started lessons on the guitar, but she was drawn to play the fiddle. Among other reasons, it was a lighter and easier instrument to carry around for a 9-year-old.

Ava is currently a member of the 2025-26 Sweet Potato Pie Kids Performing Band. She also serves as a substitute instructor and has agreed to fill in at other locations throughout the program as she is needed. The YAM Program is very important in her life, and she hopes to stay involved in the program for a long time!



AFTERNOON AND EVENING PROGRAMS GOING STRONG

The Afterschool Programs officially started the fall session on September 29th, with ten schools participating, and initial enrollment at 351 students. Forest Acres will be starting its new program the first week in November and Clemson Elementary will start up in January. A total of 242 rental instruments has been sent out to our afterschool students.

Several schools already have their performances on the books for the YAM students to participate in the Christmas Programs in December and our entire group of YAM students will perform onstage at the Winter Bluegrass Jubilee on Saturday, January 31st, at Pickens High School.

Our newest evening program is in session in the lower level of the Fine Arts Building at Southern Wesleyan University. Jarah Roper, an instructor at Liberty Elementary and the Liberty Evening Program for several years is heading up this program as Program Director and also as mandolin and fiddle instructor. A Southern Wesleyan University student, Selah Smith, is the guitar instructor.

We have other evening programs at the Pickens Sr. Center, The First Baptist Church of Easley, The Roper Building in Six Mile, and the Eagles Nest Art Center in Salem. If you know of an adult or student who would like to learn to play a stringed instrument, you may want to let them know about the fantastic programs we have going year-round at these sites. For further information you may contact Pauline at pblackston@yamupstate.com.



CHARLES HOOD

is known as a prominent, successful radiologist employed by Prisma, South Carolina's largest non-profit, private healthcare system.

Who would ever have guessed he grew up in the small town of Pickens and knows so much about the individuals of the town and every street and road that makes up this town?! And who would ever have guessed that he not only is an accomplished physician, but he is also an amazing author!

His most recent book, *Looking for Space*, is a touching true life's story of how he was uprooted from the security of everything familiar at his home in Carmel, Indiana with the passing of his dad when he was only ten years old. That was a huge trauma in itself, but having to move to Monterey Peninsula in California, and then, in contrast, to small town Pickens was childhood trauma magnified!

In his book, Charles relates so many of his personal feelings about his experiences growing up and the amusing little antics he and friends did as small-town boys. He also focuses on individuals who impacted his life in significant ways and historical events and places that helped to shape who he is today.

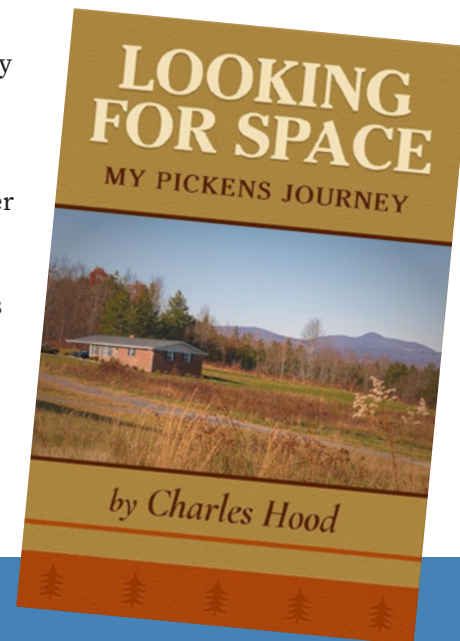
Growing up in Pickens myself, during the same decade, I was surprised by his amazing memory of places and people, childhood entertainment, toys, fads, all the many

things that help to make up the culture of a region. He also picked up on the fact that these individuals in Pickens felt they held a personal stake in you, no matter who you were. You were their responsibility to guide in the way of truth and right.

Charles evidently took in everything that was poured into him and even after he went off to college, medical school, and into adulthood he retained these bits of knowledge, wisdom, and caring in his heart. His book is both touching and profound! It is informative and entertaining. I highly recommend this book as one every Pickens native and beyond should read!

Another aspect of Charles that solicits admiration is the fact that he is an individual who gives back to society as a token of appreciation for those individuals and causes that have helped him along the way. He has designated the royalties from *Looking for Space* to be donated to the YAM Program, the program that boasts a scholarship fund in honor and memory of his late son, Ryan, an extremely talented young musician.

As I read Charles' book, I was particularly touched by a part of his Valedictorian speech at his graduation, "In your coming travels down the river of life, never hesitate to look back in fond remembrance." This is exactly what Charles has done in *Looking for Space*! You may obtain your own copy from Amazon under: Charles Hood, *Looking for Space*.



Thanks for the Memories



This year marks the ending of an era, of sorts – Teresa Ferrell has been the YAM bookkeeper for many years. She began in the program around 2014 and served as YAM courier and then bookkeeper. It has been somewhat of a family affair as her husband, Ryan, served as our POSAM Board Chair and Treasurer throughout these years. Her son, Isaac, was a gifted young banjo player in the program, qualified for SPPKids, and even played internationally with a talented bluegrass band. Isaac also served on our POSAM Board until his successful military career precluded it. We wish Teresa and the entire Ferrell family the best as they now pursue other endeavors.



NEW DIRECTORS JOIN THE BOARD!

Brett Morris, JAM's Executive Director and President since 2014, has joined as the most recent member of the POSAM Board. Brett is certainly no stranger to the YAM Program, having been a support to the YAM Program for many years.



Many of the instruments and accessories we have and use have been supplied to us through the JAM Program. It is also through Brett's JAM Program that our certified instructors receive extra hourly pay for instructing.

Brett grew up in Grayson County, Virginia, and currently resides there. This is where she learned to dance and play traditional old time and bluegrass music. She is an award-

winning clawhammer banjo player, and a flatfoot dancer, as well as a published songwriter. She also plays in a well-known group called the Blue Ridge Girls.

Among her educational attainments are two Bachelor of Arts degrees in Public Policy and Community Service, and also English, from Emory & Henry College, plus additional studies.

Also, joining the Board is Tim Johnson, who has served in numerous capacities throughout the Pickens County Educational system. His former positions include

Agriculture and Business Education Teacher, Instructional Coach and Secondary Coordinator and Assistant Director of Pickens County Virtual Academy, and Assistant Principal. He will assume a new role in 2026 as the Director of Gateway to Innovation. This will be a "future-focused" Career and Technical Education campus and will be located at the site of the former Pickens Middle School. The new facility will open in January 2027. Tim described the Gateway to Innovation as "the beginning of a story that will echo for generations" and "represents opportunity, hope, and transformation for every student who walks through its doors." The facility will also provide high-quality childcare for the School District of Pickens County employees. During the evenings, there will be expanded workforce development opportunities for adults.

Tim's educational attainments are Bachelor of Science in Ornamental Horticulture, Clemson University, and Master of Business Administration and Management at Southern Wesleyan University.



We are extremely pleased to welcome these two individuals to the POSAM Board!

FIDDLE INSTRUCTORS WANTED

Do you love traditional Appalachian music? Great with kids? Young Appalachian Musicians is looking for fiddle players who play by ear to join our team!

We're hiring fiddle instructors to teach in a group setting — no sheet music, just heart, ear, and a passion for passing down the tradition.

If you're ready to help shape the next generation of bluegrass fiddlers, send your resume (with 3 references) to Pauline at blackspm1@outlook.com.

Let's keep the music alive — one tune at a time!

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