

The Rhythm Bones Society (RBS) can help you:

Find a pair of bones to call your own

RBS can help you find places to purchase bones either online or in person

Learn to play the bones

RBS has numerous resources on how to play the bones and may be able to connect you to a bones player in your area

Connect with a community of bones players

RBS is first and foremost a community of folks who love the bones! (See below for info on Bonesfest!!!)

Explore the history of the Rhythm Bones

RBS strives to discover and preserve the history of the Rhythm Bones

View archival performances online at www.RhythmBones.org which has a ton of footage of both modern and early bones performances!

Bonesfest!!!

The RBS presents an annual rhythm bones Festival that brings together the top rhythm bones performers in North America and possibly the world! Everyone is welcome from beginning to advanced players to those who just appreciate a good beat. In the words of so many attendees "it's like going to a family reunion of a family I didn't realize I had." Bonesfest is a host driven festival and as a result the location and dates change from year to year. Bonesfest always happens in the summer and it is always an exhilarating and memorable experience.



Visit the Rhythm Bones Society Website:

www.RhythmBones.org

Rhythm Bones Society

1060 Lower Brow Road

Signal Mountain, TN 37377

The Rhythm Bones Society is a 501 (C)(3) non-profit organization.

What are Rhythm Bones?

Bones are sets of slabs or sticks, held two (or more) in each hand, and made to strike each other to make snapping and rolling sounds. Bones are one of several types of clappers. The name is derived from their original composition and nomenclature – bones. Originally rib bones of animals were used since their size and shape fit the hands. For different sounds, tones and conveniences other materials, particularly wood, are often used. The photograph below shows a variety of rhythm bones.



History of Rhythm Bones

Rhythm bones in some form date back as far as recorded civilization. They have been excavated from sites in Mesopotamia and Egypt (circa 3000 BCE), were depicted on Greek urns (circa 500 BCE) and were popular instruments in the Roman Empire. In Europe today, bones are most widely heard in connection with Irish and Scottish folk music. During the mid 1800s, the Virginia Minstrels toured the world with the rhythm bones. Millions have heard the bones (many without realizing it) on Brother Bones' 1949 recording of Sweet Georgia Brown. Thanks to the efforts of a handful of enthusiasts coupled with a renewed interest in North American roots music the rhythm bones are still with us today.

brochure design by Hancock Graphics 703.965.1848



Join the Rhythm Bones Society!



The Rhythm Bones Society is a non-profit educational society formed for the purpose of the continuation, promotion and improvement of the rhythm bones, an ancient musical instrument.

In 1997 Ev Cowett, the patriarch of a bones playing family, held what became the first annual Bonesfest at his home in North Carolina. At the time many of those in attendance believed they were the last bones players in the country. The shared enthusiasm of those initial gatherings became the seeds of a remarkably vibrant community.

During a meeting at Bonesfest III in 1999 the attendees agreed to form a non-profit organization dedicated to their instrument. Joe Birl, longtime bones manufacturer and inventor of the patented "notched" bones, agreed to allow the use of his trademarked name "Rhythm Bones" and the Rhythm Bones Society was born. The society has been spreading the word and rattling the bones ever since – and we invite you to join us!

Join the Rhythm Bones Society . . .



When Ev Cowett organized what would become the first annual Bonesfest in 1997, many of the players in attendance believed that they were the last bones players in the country. They held this belief with good reason – the rhythm bones saw a significant decline in popularity in the 1900's. Fortunately they were wrong. Thanks largely to the efforts of a few key bones "ambassadors" such as Percy Danforth, Joe Birl and others, the rhythm bones did not die out.

The Rhythm Bones Society exists to keep the rhythm bones alive and to pass them on to the next generation. We are first and foremost a community of like minded individuals who share a sense of joy and passion for the bones. We are determined to honor tradition and to break new ground. We do this primarily with a website, a quarterly newsletter and an annual rhythm bones festival.



Quarterly Newsletter



RhythmBones.org

Our website is an excellent resource for beginners and seasoned players alike. There are resources to help you find bones and to learn to play. There are profiles of members both past and present, articles on rhythm bones history and links to the bones community via discussion boards and social media. To top it off there are hours of video featuring both instruction and archival performances and the site is regularly updated with news and new content.

Our quarterly newsletter, The Rhythm Bones Player, documents the living history of the bones community. The newsletter features articles on bones players both past and present, playing techniques, reviews, calendars of events, links to new recordings, editorials and more. A copy of every newsletter is catalogued with the U. S. Library of Congress.



Annual Bonesfest!

Bonesfest is an annual festival that brings together the top rhythm bones performers in North America and possibly the world! Everyone is welcome from beginning to advanced players to those who just appreciate a good beat. In the words of so many attendees "it's like going to a family reunion of a family I didn't realize I had." Bonesfest is a host driven festival and as a result the location and dates change from year to year. Bonesfest always happens in the summer and it is always an exhilarating and memorable experience.

Bones players today have many more resources than they did in 1997. The modern internet with all of its social media outlets allows for easy sharing of information. A renewed interest in North American roots music has made many people aware of the rhythm bones. The most important difference between then and now is that the Rhythm Bones Society works to nourish and expand the growing bones community.

**Join today and help
us make history!**

...and help us preserve one of the world's oldest musical instruments.