



Music may not make the world go round, but there is no question that it makes it a better place. Two Homewood staples have spent decades supplying the Birmingham area with instruments with which to make beautiful sounds. These instrument icons, Homewood Instrument Company and Fretted Instruments, share their love of all things musical and all things Birmingham.

Bob Tedrow, Homewood Instrument Co.

"A lot of the work is incredibly tedious and boring, and I really don't know why I like it," Bob Tedrow says laughing. He is referencing the labor involved in crafting replicas of 19th-century concertinas at his shop, Homewood Instruments Company. It's a painfully focused process. Imagine: hundreds of tiny, delicate moveable parts, no owner's manual nor blueprint from the original artisans buried alongside them.

Unlike his work, Bob certainly can't be classified as "tedious and boring." Between his enthusiasm, quick wit and intense knowledge of music, it is easy to see why his store has achieved a 20-year tenure in Homewood.

Bob was born in Fort Collins, Colorado, and moved to Birmingham two decades ago so that his wife could attend Cumberland School of Law.

"We liked it, and we stayed," he says. "I liked the lack of snow, and this place has spectacularly wonderful people."

While Bob's move to Birmingham may have been his wife's doing, he blames his early education in music on a different lady.

"My love of music is really my grandmother's fault," he explains. "She was a jazz piano player and an avid sports car enthusiast. She smelled like turpentine and cookies, and she taught me to play my first instrument, which was the ukulele. Her name was Belle Hest. She was a pistol, that one."

Belle played the piano, the organ and the ukulele and was a flapper back in the 1920s. Today, in fond remembrance, Bob plays the saxophone, guitar, Irish flute, concertina, clarinet and, of course, the ukulele. And you might catch a banjo tune inside of his store, as well. His associate, Jason Burns, builds 19th-century banjos.

Stop in for lessons on the concertina, the banjo, guitar or ukulele (\$45-\$75/hour) or have your guitar, violin or woodwind instrument serviced or repaired. Or, you can just enjoy Bob's stories. His repertoire includes selling a custom-built concertina to a client in the South Pole.

At Homewood Instrument Company, there is always a motley crew of musicians, but for a true experience in Bob's talents, he advises visiting his street. "We have a neighborhood band that plays Irish music," he says. "The band is called La Playa Ceili—after the street we live on. If people want to hear us, all they have to do is drive down our block on a summer evening. We play on the porch and love for people to come sit and have a glass of wine and listen."

"I have always thought that Birmingham's music scene is marvelously eclectic. It is charming how our city has a range from fiddlers to symphony music to all those American idol contestants—it's very diversified." BOB TEDROW

Where You Might Run Into Bob Tedrow: "At the Piggly Wiggly in Homewood where I buy my groceries. Look in the produce section near the wine."
Store Motto: "We build things that cost a lot of money that not many people want such as concertinas. It's really the secret to our success."
His Thoughts on Birmingham's Music Scene: "I have always thought that Birmingham's music scene is marvelously eclectic. It is charming how our city has a range from fiddlers to symphony music to all those American idol contestants—it's very diversified."

OPPOSITE: Bob Tedrow puts loving touches into his replicas of 19th-century concertinas. Customers as far away as the South Pole appreciate his eye for detail.